DEFENDING DEMOCRACY

Reactions to Extremism in Interwar Europe

Giovanni Capoccia

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Giovanni Capoccia

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CHAPTER ONE

Democratic Stability and Democratic Crisis

> In societies, particularly European societies, in which democratic regimes gained considerable stability, relatively few problems were of the structural type; many of the difficulties arose following decisions by the democratic leadership that made solutions within the democratic framework impossible. Oversimplifying somewhat, we can say that a regime's unsolvable problems are often the work of its elites. . . . It would also seem that without attention to the historical political process, it would be difficult to explain why political institutions in different societies do not suffer the same fate on experiencing similar strains.
>
> —JUAN J. LINZ, "CRISIS, BREAKDOWN AND REEQUILIBRATION"

Not all democracies that can break down actually do. This was true even for interwar Europe, where democracy faced one of its darkest moments. Yet comparative politics scholars interested in interwar Europe—and elsewhere—have traditionally asked why certain democracies collapsed. For several years, under the influence of important authors such as Alexander Gerschenkron, Seymour Martin Lipset, and Barrington Moore, among others, the problem of democratic breakdown in interwar Europe was principally framed in terms of the presence or absence of certain socioeconomic or cultural conditions, while much less attention was devoted to specific political and dynamic factors, at least as independent determinants of a certain regime outcome. In 1978, Linz and Stepan challenged this "structuralist" approach to interwar democratic crises by focusing their analysis of democratic breakdowns on the strategies and choices of political and institutional actors during a political crisis. The European countries analyzed in that volume, however, were almost exclusively examples of democratic breakdown, that is, of failure of democratic leaderships (Linz and Stepan 1978).[1] This phenomenon has been well captured by O'Donnell and Schmitter's (quite literally) dramatic words: "crucial *personae*

during the breakdown period seem in retrospect like actors in a Greek tragedy, anticipating their fate but fulfilling it to the bitter end, powerless either to modify their solidarities, alliances, and styles, or to control the international, macroeconomic, macrosocial, and institutional factors that led toward the breakdown" (O'Donnell and Schmitter 1986, 19). One of the messages of Linz and Stepan's volume, however, is that none of those breakdowns was predetermined: they could have been avoided if "right" decisions had been taken and some crucial mistakes had been avoided. I share this view completely and add to that the contention that failures of democratic leadership can be better understood by analyzing leadership *success.* In other words, if certain choices made by political leaders during democratic crises are quite properly considered to be harmful for democratic persistence, then the "right" choices in similar critical moments must be seen as contributing to the survival of democracy. Yet very little is known of such "right" choices—which actors are best placed to make them, the minimal political conditions that make them possible, and in which countries such choices made a difference for democracy's survival. That is what this book is about.

More specifically, the analysis centers on the short-term strategies that democratic rulers can adopt against extremist actors who use the guarantees and rights of democracy to challenge democracy itself. Even so specified, the field of analysis remains vast and needs some further definition and clarification. First of all, I limit myself to political decisions designed to have effects *in the short term* against an extremist challenge that is already strong and active in its opposition to the regime. This excludes all political decisions and institutional arrangements that are designed to have beneficial effects for democracy in the longer run—for example, those acting on political culture or civil society. As I specify in chapter 3, the distinction between short- and long-term strategies of democratic defense not only is important from a theoretical point of view, but also has a very concrete empirical grounding: any presence of extremists strong enough to threaten to take over the system poses an urgent problem to democratic rulers. In such cases there is no time to plan ahead, the imperative is *primum vivere.* Second, the book deals with the problems posed to democratic regimes by those extremist forces that "play the democratic game," that is, use the rights and guarantees of democracy to bring democracy to collapse, in particular, "antisystem" parties. This is not the only "extreme" challenge that a democratic government might have to face: political terrorism, violent insurrection, external or civil war all obviously constitute threats to the survival of

a democratic regime too. What distinguishes the specific type of challenge brought about by antisystem parties is that the "enemy" is not only *ante portas* (at the gates), as in the foregoing examples: they are also *intra moenia,* that is, inside the citadel of democratic political institutions. To be sure, often the "internal" and "external" challenges go together—that is, the vanguard of the antisystem movement may sit in parliament while the rank and file commit violent acts in the streets. Yet what makes this kind of challenge qualitatively different is its presence within the decision-making arenas of the system—noticeably, in the case of parties, the national parliament. In parliamentary democracies characterized by a relatively structured party system (Sartori 1976), parties have a characteristic that no other political actor has: their representatives, in form of MPs or ministers, are the ones entrusted to make most key political decisions, which interest groups and other sectors of the establishment, at least in principle, are not. When parties challenge the system, then, it is of particular concern: when one or more antisystem parties are represented in democratic institutions and win a substantial degree of political strength, they not only threaten the existence of the political system, they also potentially undermine the ability of democratic actors effectively to respond to such threats.

Still in the vein of defining and clarifying the scope of the analysis carried out in the book, a last point needs to be mentioned briefly: behind the empirical investigation of the clash between a democratic government and an extremist opposition lies the eternal normative democratic dilemma of "tolerance for the intolerant." Many authors have addressed it, suggesting different theoretical and normative—and often opposed—solutions (see, e.g., Bon Valsassina 1957; Lippincott 1965; Sartori 1957; Agnoli 1973; Keenan 2003). In this book, the dilemma in question is investigated from an exclusively empirical point of view, through a comparative analysis of how the contradiction between, on the one hand, the need for tolerance and, on the other, the danger that the intolerant represent for the persistence of the very principle of tolerance, has historically been solved in practical terms. This author holds the view that democracy—in the interwar years as well as now—is preferable to its nondemocratic alternatives, but no normative judgment is implicit in the analysis of the various strategies of democratic defense as regards their choice and extent—a particularly delicate problem, especially with respect to repressive strategies. What this book shows is how the democratic elites of certain countries have coped with the thorny problem of defending democracy with-

out resorting to the suspension of democratic procedures and guarantees tout court. In fact, the latter course of action is often open to a government under attack and has historically been pursued in several countries, normally with high human and social costs, as old and new examples, from interwar Austria to 1990s Algeria, illustrate.

Case Selection

The question of what political processes and strategies are necessary to defeat the challenge posed by antidemocratic parties could in principle be researched in different settings. Among those, the European states of the interwar period present a particularly interesting field of analysis, for several reasons. First of all, the interwar decades in Europe were marked by major events involving, directly or indirectly, all countries of the continent: of these, World War I and its aftermath, and the Great Depression following the Wall Street crash of 1929 stand out as the most important. Moreover, the new political order that emerged after the collapse of the central empires did not make the continent "safe for democracy," as some optimistic observers had hoped. In fact, in this period virtually all European democracies, old and new, were challenged by substantial nondemocratic movements or parties that questioned their legitimacy and, in several cases, led to their collapse: Communist parties and movements were paralleled, at the extreme right of the political spectrum, by Fascist or Nazi forces, while in some countries vociferous ethnic minorities contested the boundaries of the state, at times abiding at the same time by nondemocratic ideologies (see, e.g., Loewenstein 1935a and b; Rappard 1938; Eschenburg 1966; Stern 1997).

Within the universe of interwar European democracies, I have chosen to concentrate on a relatively restricted number of cases that appear most appropriate to the task at hand. What drives the selection is the particular kind of process leading to the outcome of democratic breakdown or survival, logically a contextual variable. In fact, in order to explore the conditions and effects of politico-institutional reactions of democratic incumbents to antisystem forces, it is imperative to choose cases in which the process of regime crisis was characterized by the political struggle between a democratic government and an antisystem party threatening to take over. The incorporation of both cases of survival and breakdown allows increasing the leverage of the design by achieving variation on the dependent variable (e.g., Diesing 1972, 189).[2]

Table 1.1 Case Selection

Democrats prevail	Struggle between democratic incumbents and antisystem outsiders as primary characteristic of the political process: Yes	Struggle between democratic incumbents and antisystem outsiders as primary characteristic of the political process: No
Yes	Challenged survivors: Czechoslovakia, Finland, Belgium, (France)	Non-challenged survivors: The Netherlands, Norway, Sweden, Denmark, Switzerland, United Kingdom
No	Takeovers: Germany, Italy	"Suspension" or preemptive coup: Bulgaria, Portugal, Poland, Lithuania, Yugoslavia, Austria, Estonia, Latvia, Greece, Romania

Twenty-four European regimes could be considered democratic around 1920. By 1939, the number of democracies had decreased to eleven; in the remaining thirteen states, some form of autocratic rule had been established. The typology of table 1.1 highlights that within the two sets of breakdowns and survivals are important differences in the political processes leading to the respective regime outcomes.[3]

In particular, the model of "legal revolution" (Bracher 1953, 1966, 1974)—by which aggressive antidemocratic parties exploit the rights and guarantees of democracy to participate in the political process with the ultimate aim of bringing democracy down—has often been used to describe the paradigmatic cases of the victory of Fascist and Nazi forces in Italy and Weimar Germany in the early 1920s and the early 1930s, respectively. While labeling those political transitions as "legal revolutions" may underemphasize the importance of the illegal and violent actions undertaken by supporters of these parties in bringing down the regime, the stress on the "legal" nature of the takeovers highlights, among other things, the failure of democratic incumbents in reacting to these challenges.[4] To put it differently, extremists played the democratic game, and the government, despite the extremists' obviously cynical attitude to the rules of democracy, neither changed the rules accordingly nor did enough to weaken the political position of such dangerous players. This, however, is not the way things went in most of the European countries in which democracy did not survive in the 1920s and 1930s. In several other cases, either because

large parts of the political establishment were not democratically minded or because the challenges were too strong to keep the system of democratic guarantees alive, democracy was—to stick with our spatial metaphor—"killed from above" rather than "taken over from below." That is, either the government in charge indefinitely suspended democratic rights and guarantees or there was a successful coup, in which the regime was turned into a nondemocratic one by the action of sectors of its elites—in some cases precisely against extremist outsiders.

Indefinite suspension of democracy tout court was characteristic of several European countries in the 1920s and 1930s. Military coups put an end to democracy in Bulgaria in 1923 and in Portugal, Lithuania, and Poland in 1926, while in 1929 the conflict-ridden Yugoslav democracy was replaced by a monarchical autocracy through unilateral intervention by the king (see, respectively, Grothusen 1990; Costa Pinto 1999; Holzer 1999; Ajnenkel 1983; Seton-Watson and Laffan 1966; and Singleton 1985). Monarchical autocracies also replaced democracy in Greece in 1936 and in Romania two years later. In Greece, the restoration of the monarchy in 1935 constituted the first phase of the crisis of the democratic regime that had been reinstated a decade before. After several months in which political forces failed to find equilibrium, the king called General Metaxas, an open advocate of dictatorship, to the premiership. Acting under the king's authority, Metaxas established a full-fledged dictatorship in August 1936 (Zink 1999). While in Greece the extreme right-wing forces were a substantial part of the coalition supporting the king and Metaxas's "twin dictatorship," in Romania the king established an autocratic system explicitly directed against the Fascist Iron Guards, which in 1937 had increased its share of the votes to 15.8 percent. This electoral result would have entitled them to sixty-six seats, but the Parliament was dissolved before being convened (Hitchens 1994; Fischer-Galati 1999). Austrian democracy was also "killed from above," mainly by the actions of the leader of the Christian Social Party—and prime minister—Engelbert Dollfuss, who staged a coup to preempt extremist political threats. Dollfuss first led his party into an alliance with the Fascist *Heimwehr,* then banned the Communist and Nazi oppositions, and finally disbanded party pluralism tout court. In 1934, an authoritarian-corporatist constitution superseded the 1920 one (e.g., Simon 1978; Gerlich and Campbell 1999). The democratic breakdowns in Estonia and Latvia, which shortly followed the Austrian transition, can also be assigned to the same category. There, too, democratically elected leaders—President Päts in Estonia

and Prime Minister Ulmanis in Latvia—established authoritarianism in order to thwart the threat posed by an antisystem right-wing force. In Latvia the fragmentation of the political spectrum due to the substantial presence of ethnic minorities contributed to making the political situation less manageable (Ajnenkiel 1983; Linz 1978a, 70).

The "takeover" and "suspension" types of democratic breakdown can be distinguished by a crucial trait in the political process that led to each outcome. In the two "takeovers," a harsh struggle took place between the democratic incumbents and (at least) one antidemocratic political actor. To be sure, the latter also attacked the citadel of democratic power "from outside," undermining the regime's effectiveness by using political violence, but at the same time it used the rules of that same regime to penetrate and then overthrow it. At the beginning of this process, democratic forces held power but failed to respond effectively to the challenges arising from political society. As a result, they increasingly lost power until an antisystem actor, thanks to a shrewd coalition strategy, took control of the levers of government while formally respecting the constitutional procedures and established a nondemocratic regime soon thereafter. In the cases classifiable as "(indeterminate) suspensions of democracy"—the "killing from above" of a democratic system—the process of crisis took a different path. As the brief examples above show, one of the following two scenarios occurred. In some countries, nondemocratic factions within incumbent forces wrested power from the more democratic sections of the establishment and set up an authoritarian regime. In some other countries, democratically elected leaders preempted the antisystem threat, preventing possible takeover and loss of power by abandoning democratic procedures altogether. The point is that in all of these cases, the struggle that characterized the process of crisis did not oppose democratic incumbents and antidemocratic outsiders, as happened in the "takeover" cases. In all of the cases of the bottom-right cell of table 1.1, leaving aside which of the two scenarios outlined above occurred, the main fight took place either between sections of the establishment or between nondemocratic incumbents (e.g., incumbents completely disregarding democratic procedures) and nondemocratic outsiders.

Radically different political processes may also account for the alternative regime outcome, that is, democratic survival. As in breakdown cases, the existence or absence of a political struggle between democratic incumbents and antidemocratic outsiders marks the line of distinction between different types of democratic survival in interwar Europe. The main indicator of such a

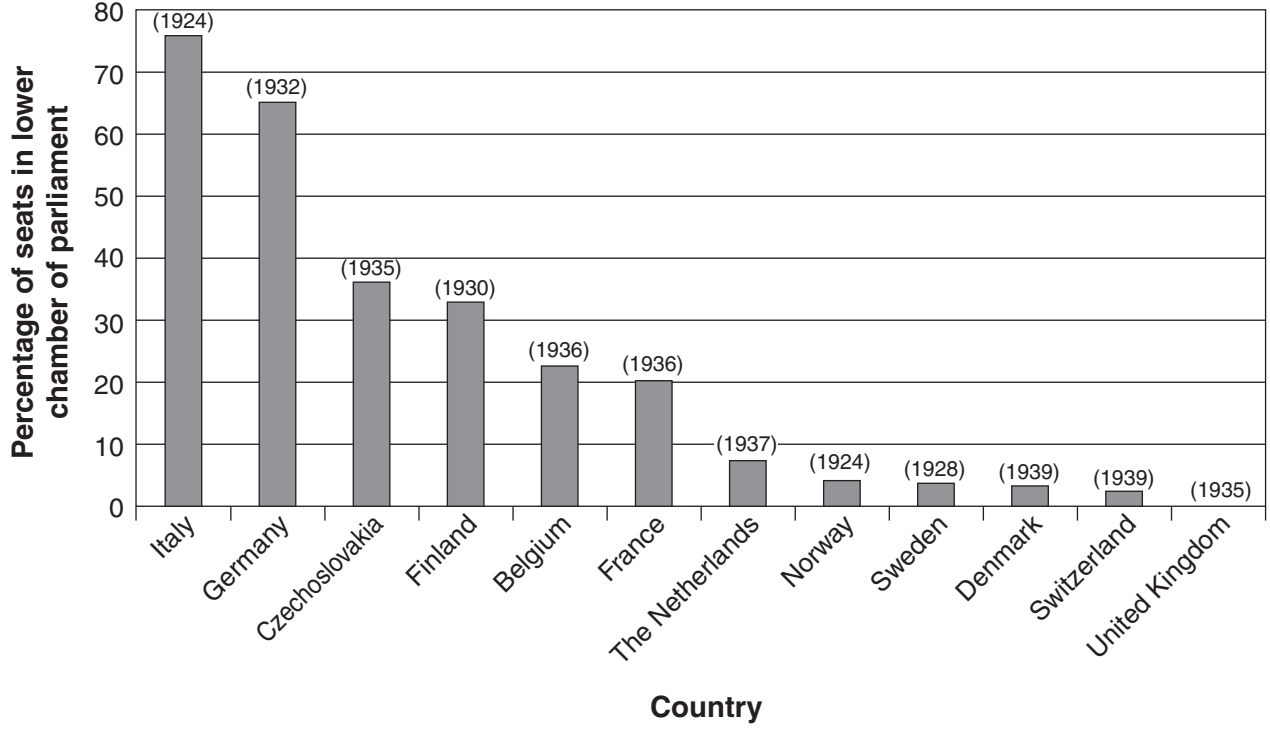

Figure 1.1. Peak results of antisystem parties, 1919–39

struggle in survival cases is the strength of antisystem political forces. In fact, if no relevant antisystem actor is present to challenge the persistence of the democratic system, the incumbents will not have to undertake any serious struggle to make the regime survive: the existence of the democratic system is simply not seriously questioned. On the contrary, a political struggle of the kind that I have singled out in "takeovers" exists in those cases where antisystem forces, formally playing by the rules of the democratic game with the more or less concealed intention to do away with democracy itself, reach a significant level of strength.

In order to distinguish more precisely between the two types of democratic survival, I operationalize the strength of the challenge to a democratic regime as the highest percentage of seats held by antisystem parties in the lower chamber of parliament during the period under analysis here. As explained in more detail in chapter 2, I consider as "antisystem" parties those formations that on the basis of their "controlling goals" are against either the fundamentals of pluralist democracy or the territorial unity of the state, or both. This basically restricts the field of such formations to Nazi, fascist or authoritarian parties; communist parties; and secessionist-irredentist parties.[5] The operationalization of the "strength of the challenge" described above is driven by the very nature of the enterprise. Although in principle it is obvious that important challenges to a democratic system can be brought about by political actors other than political parties (e.g., interest groups, the army, etc.), when extremism takes the form of a political party, it brings the challenge into the heart of the system. As explained above, this poses a serious coordination problem to the incumbent democratic parties, one that can potentially impair their capability to react to the challenge. The parliament, in fact, is the main arena where political majorities are formed to support reaction against extremists, whether this consists of passing special legislative measures or simply in backing the executive branch in its various defensive actions. In conditions where antisystem parties enjoy significant parliamentary representation, it is reasonable to expect that they would perceive themselves as future victims of such reactions and would therefore use their influence on parliamentary proceedings and political interactions to render it difficult for democratically minded political forces to achieve the necessary unity to coordinate a deliberate strategy of systemic defense. In general, one extremist party will constitute the main challenge in different moments, but all other extremist formations, although possibly ideologically very far from the main challenger, will most

often constitute further political constraints on democratic forces trying to reach agreement on a common defensive strategy. This is why I operationalize the strength of the challenge as the total number of seats of all antisystem parties rather than merely the dominant antisystem party. The lower chamber is chosen because it normally has a more important constitutional position than the upper chamber, as well as for reasons of parsimony. The "peaks" represent moments of crisis in which the democratic system was under considerable strain and in serious danger of breakdown. Since the analysis focuses on the process of crisis, the choice of the peaks is preferable to other measures.[6]

Figure 1.1 ranks twelve cases (ten survived democracies, and the breakdown cases of Italy and the Weimar Republic) on the basis of the peak percentage of seats achieved by antisystem parties in the lower chamber between 1919 and 1939. Unsurprisingly, the two cases of breakdown score highest. On this point, more later. For now, it should be noted that the Italian data (antisystem parties attaining 75.5% of the seats in 1924) overestimates the strength of "pure" antisystem forces: about 66.5% of the seats in those elections went to an alliance among Fascists and several sectors of the political establishment in the *listone* (grand list). While the Fascists and in particular Mussolini soon hegemonized the alliance, the lists also contained numerous Liberals and Conservatives who did not fully share the Fascists' political objectives. In the case of Germany, the bar represents the situation after the elections of November 1932. The most interesting aspect of figure 1.1 is that at least three of the countries whose democratic system survived faced very strong challenges. In Czechoslovakia after the 1935 elections and in Finland in 1930–31, extremist parties occupied about a third of the parliamentary seats in the more important chamber, while in Belgium (1936–39) this percentage was slightly below a quarter. The data on France, representing the strength of the Communists and the right-wing "independents" in the last Parliament of the Third Republic, probably overestimates to some extent the strength of the extremist challenge, since not all "independents" could be considered extremists. Precise historical research on the matter does not exist, and it is impossible to determine the exact political affiliation of all of the MPs classified in this group (Pinol 1992; Le Béguec 1992).[7] The cases of Czechoslovakia, Finland, and Belgium, therefore, present themselves as critical in any serious attempt to assess the opportunity for the enactment of and the possibilities for the success of strategies for the defense of the democratic system. In these countries, in fact, the parliamentary strength of antisystem forces rendered the political conditions for the coordi-

nation of democratic forces around a common strategy less auspicious than in any other case of survival.

To return to the typology of table 1.1, we have already seen that in the countries included in the right-hand cells, democrats prevailed or succumbed in a different sense than they did in the cases listed on the left. In the non-challenged democracies of the upper-right cell, democrats prevailed against weak opponents, while in only a few of the cases in the lower-right cell could a substantial democratic front be said to have existed at all. The relevant cases for this analysis are instead those in the left-hand cells (shaded in gray): a close investigation of the deployment and outcome of the crisis processes in Czechoslovakia, Finland, and Belgium against the background of the better-known political dynamics of democratic failure in Italy and Germany allows a much more insightful perspective on the possibility of democratic leadership success in challenged democracies. More generally, adding a theoretically informed historical analysis of "difficult" survival cases to our already satisfactory knowledge of breakdown cases allows us to redirect a diffuse "selection bias" syndrome (King, Keohane, and Verba 1994; Geddes 2003; see also Collier and Mahoney 1996) from which the literature on democratic crises in interwar Europe, with a few notable exceptions, has suffered so far.

As mentioned above, antisystem parties reached a much higher strength in Italy and Germany than in Czechoslovakia, Finland, and Belgium. Although this difference correlates with the dependent variable—that is, with the final outcome of the crisis—this does not yield the conclusion that the crisis process was fundamentally different in the two sets of countries, or that the strategies and decisions of the political protagonists of the time had no impact. The similarities between the selected cases of survival and breakdown are clear if one looks at the development of the challenge (that is, the results of antisystem parties) over time, as represented in figure 1.2. It is sufficiently obvious, in fact, that the highest peaks in the strength of the antisystem actors in Italy and Weimar Germany was reached immediately before the collapse of these regimes and their transformation into autocratic systems. Antisystem actors in these countries had not always been so strong. As shown in figure 1.2, not only do Italy and Germany exhibit lower levels of threat at earlier times, but in both cases the level of systemic challenge skyrocketed in a very short span of time, one election in Italy, three (held at a very short time distance from each other) in Germany. Immediately before that, the challenge in Italy and Germany was weaker than the challenge the other three countries faced at other time points:

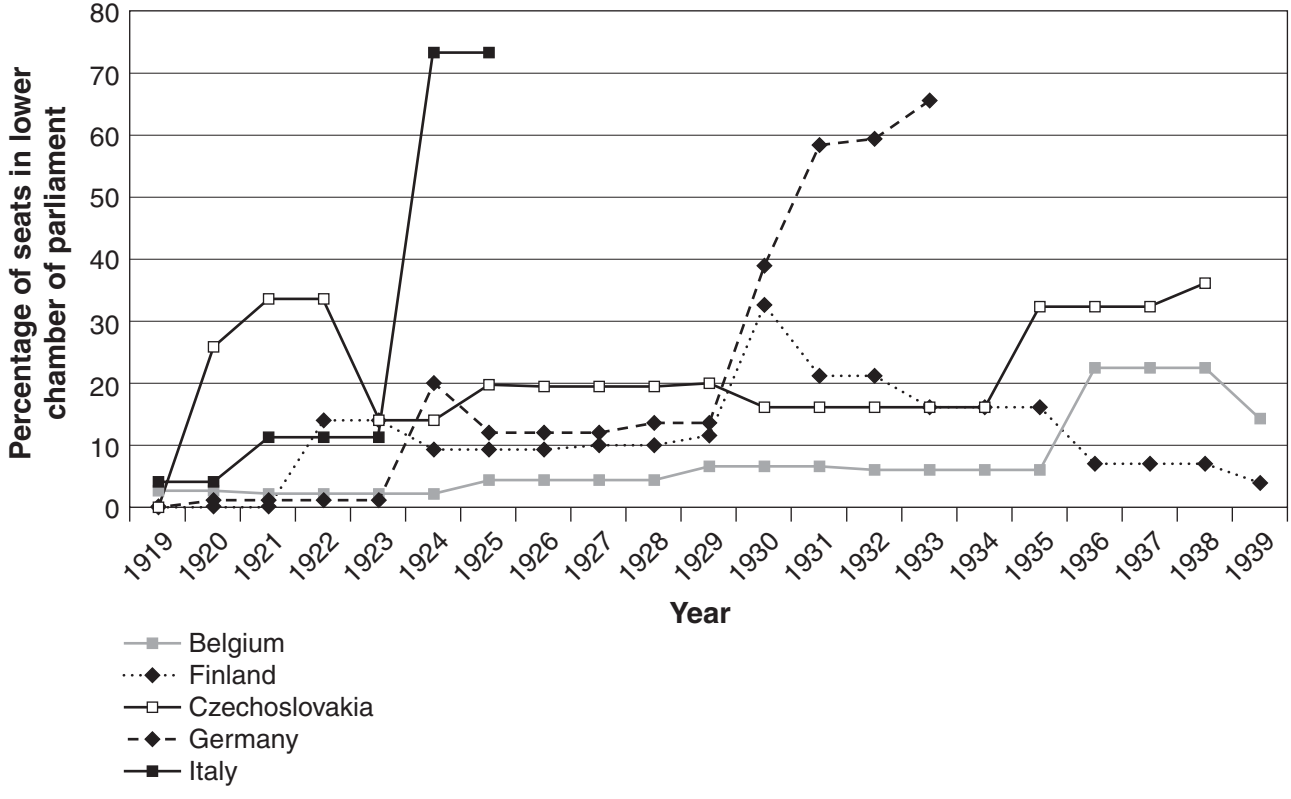

Figure 1.2. Strength of antisystem parties in five European democracies, 1919–39

in Czechoslovakia, Finland, and Belgium, democratic rulers managed to overcome stronger challenges than existed in the cases of breakdown before the worst phases of crisis set in, which invites further analysis of the strategies that those democratic actors enacted to achieve this aim.

To recap: the book analyzes the political strategies and institutional arrangements to which democratic rulers can resort when the persistence of the political system is challenged by one or more strong antisystem forces emerging in the political realm. A theory-driven strategy of case selection is adopted in order to increase the leverage of the analysis. In this respect, a first screening of regime outcomes in European countries between the wars reveals that there are different types of breakdown and survival, and that some of them are better suited than others to the scrutiny of the phenomena studied here. Both categories, in fact, include a subset of cases in which democratic incumbents had to confront strong emerging antisystem challenges: in the survival cases, democrats managed to prevail, unlike in the cases where extremists took over the democratic system. The reader will not find in this book a detailed account of the political crises leading to the collapse of the Italian and German democracies in 1922–26 and 1930–33, respectively, since those stories are very well known: the analytic literature on both countries is extensive and often of excellent quality. Rather, it is more useful to concentrate attention on the three cases of the most seriously challenged democracies which survived, of which relatively little is known outside of the respective countries, and which have rarely been incorporated in broader comparative analyses.[8] A theory-informed, detailed narrative of the main aspects of the process of regime crisis in Czechoslovakia, Finland, and Belgium therefore forms the subject of three country chapters, while in a final comparative analysis the perspective will again be broadened to include the Italian and German experiences.

Political Dynamics of Defense of Democracy

Thus, the strategies of democratic incumbents are the main factor to be investigated in the attempt to understand why democratic institutions in certain countries were able to survive a challenge of extremist forces of comparable strength to those that brought other democracies to collapse. In principle, many actors and strategies can be important in influencing the direction and outcome of a regime crisis. Here, I focus on party leaders, on the one hand, and on institutional actors such as the government and the head of state,

on the other. To be sure, these actors do not act in a vacuum: other actors (interest groups, the bureaucracy, etc.) can influence their decisions. However, these are the people who must make the ultimate binding decisions or who make such decisions politically possible. The analysis in this book seeks to highlight an important point: that the actions of incumbents can actually be considered choices. That is, alternative courses of action were usually available, which, if chosen, would probably have pushed the political situation towards a different outcome.

The presence of strong antisystem parties subjected the political systems of the countries analyzed here to a particularly dangerous crisis. As explained above, the peculiar characteristic of this kind of crisis with respect to situations in which the main threat comes from outside the loci of democratic power (that is, from political violence or unrest coming from civil society or from the international arena) is that a strong antisystem party threatens the system and at the same time impairs the system's defensive capability. To understand how this happens, Sartori's theory of party system dynamics is a particularly useful framework, for two reasons: first, for the crucial role that party interplay can have in illustrating the general working of a democracy, and second, for the particular attention given to the patterns of party interaction in the presence of strong extremist parties (Sartori 1966, 1976, 1982). Sartori's theory offers a strong frame of reference to understand the incentives that influence the choices of party leaders facing the political threat of extremists, their room to maneuver, and the potential consequences of their decisions for the persistence of the regime.

As underlined in the previous section, democratic rulers have to make decisions according to democratic procedures if they want to avoid the danger of a coup-like suspension of democracy "from above." To this end, a democratic government needs the support of a parliamentary majority for its decisions on, and its enactment of, strategies of reaction to extremists. Thus, while the most important actor in defending democracy is certainly the government, there must be a stable, democratically oriented coalition that supports the choices made in defense of democracy. In general terms, various actors and strategies can successfully contribute to the stability of the government majority in a situation rendered difficult by the presence of high polarization, depending on the historical context. In the cases analyzed here, two actors in particular proved decisive in this respect: the head of state and the leadership of what I call "border parties." The label of "border parties" refers to the

location of these parties' electorate along the left-right political space; that is to say, they are adjacent to the antisystem parties, which occupy the extreme wings of the spectrum. Generally speaking, therefore, the border parties are those that have most to lose from the electoral growth of their antisystem competitors. The importance of the choices of the leaders of border parties in crucial moments of a crisis is suggested by Sartori's theoretical reasoning about the mechanics of polarized party systems.

Polarized party systems are those characterized mainly by the presence of relevant antisystem parties and bilateral oppositions, which are mutually exclusive and far apart ideologically. Sartori's analysis shows that in polarized party systems there is an built-in tendency to "centrifugal competition," in which strong antisystem parties compete in such a way as to force all others, and in particular precisely those bordering them along that space, towards extreme positions: antisystem parties, by using "outbidding" propaganda tactics, attract electors from the center and especially from the moderate wings—the border parties. The very "systemic propensities" of party competition thus push the border parties towards the extremes in order to regain the electors that they have lost, thereby nurturing the overall polarizing trend. This, in turn, has the paradoxical effect of promoting a large, fractured centrist government—as we shall see.

The incentives that border parties face in electoral competition are bound to influence their strategies in the parliamentary arena, increasing the probability that the parties in question defect from the government coalition. In polarized systems, the government is normally supported by a center-based coalition. For reasons of sheer number, it is highly likely that in the presence of strong antisystem parties (normally left out of government), border parties will be members, in one form or another, of the governmental majority, and possibly a numerically necessary part of that majority. A further characteristic of polarized party systems, logically and empirically connected to those described above, is that the government majority will normally be politically heterogeneous, which, on the one hand, makes governmental paralysis likely and, on the other, makes border parties uncomfortable. Other things being equal, this increases their incentive to defect from the majority. The option of defection can have obvious, immediate advantages: the border party would chase the votes lost to the extremists (and avoid losing more) and work for a new coalition in which its policy preferences and electoral interests are more respected. Some border parties, by virtue of their parliamentary strength and/

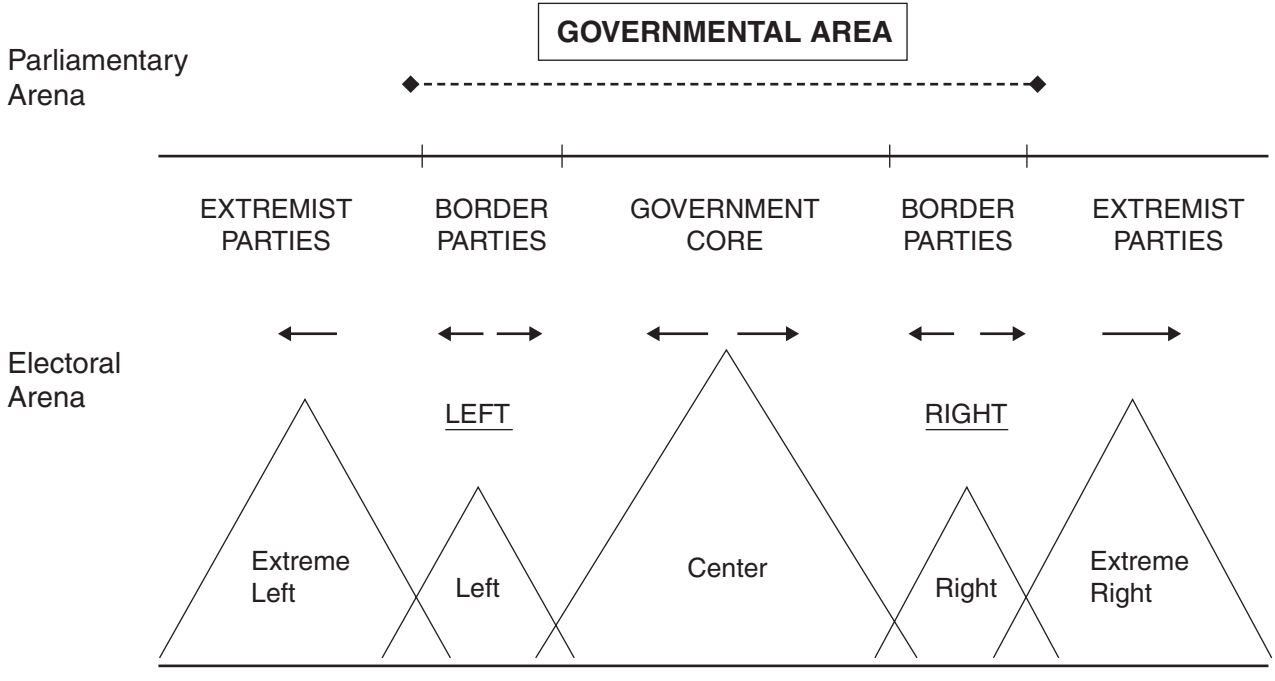

Figure 1.3. Party system propensities in the electoral and parliamentary arena

or political importance, are endowed with de facto veto power vis-à-vis the government: they not only are part of the governmental majority, they constitute (politically or numerically) an essential part of it, meaning that they can potentially veto important decisions of the cabinet. Their defection from the center-based majority therefore has the consequence of making the government unviable, thereby potentially affecting the very possibility of devising and enacting a coherent strategy of defense against the extremists, often making it more difficult.

Figure 1.3 illustrates this dynamic. Building on Sartori's original representation of electoral competition in a polarized system (on the lower horizontal line, triangles represent the parties or blocs active in the system), the graph illustrates the tendency of centrifugal electoral pushes to be transferred into the parliamentary, coalition-making arena (the upper horizontal line). Such transfer is all the more likely in the convulsive politics that normally accompany a regime crisis such as in the cases under analysis here. The government pivots on a center-based coalition, sometimes with limited rotation of minor partners over time, but virtually always within the range of the dotted line identifying the governmental area. In a crisis situation, in which one extreme party increases its votes and/or is expected to increase them substantially in the near future at the expense of the spatially adjacent border party, the border party in question may, in its decision either to cooperate with the political center or defect from it, hold the key to the regime's very capacity to react to the challenge.

To sum up, in polarized systems, a situation of crisis often leads border parties to lose votes to antisystem parties. Border parties are members of or otherwise indirectly support an uncomfortably heterogeneous government coalition, a position which is in principle far from ideal for them to recover the lost votes. In fact, government policies are unlikely to reflect these parties' own policy agenda, since hard compromises have to be made among the coalition members, which is unlikely to do much to satisfy the constituencies of border parties. In this situation, normally accompanied by a context of generalized crisis, it is not surprising that defection from the government coalition—as a way of shrugging away the unpopularity of government measures and of having a freer hand in appealing to the electorate—becomes a very attractive strategy to the leaders of the border parties or at least the leaders of some factions within them.

Thus, the very presence of strong antisystem parties not only constitutes an

objective element of crisis for the democratic regime, it also weakens the cohesion of the democratic coalition, insofar as it pushes border parties towards defection from the center. This, in fact, makes reacting against extremists more difficult—and, all other things being equal, regime breakdown more likely. This, however, does not imply that the presence of a polarized party system renders a democracy "doomed." Sartori himself makes this point clear in one of his interventions in the debate triggered by his theories. In answering his critics, Sartori reaffirmed that his model only identifies party-systemic propensities in a given type of party system and does not predetermine the regime outcome. That is, polarization and centrifugal competition, although they push the democratic system towards breakdown, are to be considered merely as "inertial tendencies" in the party system. Between these and the actual regime outcome are the strategies of political actors, who can stop or even counteract such built-in propensities: the model of polarized pluralism "predicts a trend, not an outcome or its timing. Outcomes, and timing, depend on actors."[9] Sartori's point fits well with Linz's argument that, in the context of opportunities and constraints provided by the structural characteristics of societies, "social and political actors, both men and institutions . . . have certain choices that can increase or decrease the probability of persistence and stability of a regime" (Linz 1978a, 4).[10] Depending on whether the leaders of border parties yield to the systemic propensities of party system mechanics—which is tantamount to saying that they put their immediate electoral and partisan interest first—and defect from the governmental alliance, or abide by systemic considerations and build a common front against the antisystem party, short-term defensive reactions will either be possible or not. A strategy of defection from the center would be functional either to get back the votes they are losing to the extremists, and/or to create the political conditions for a different governing majority in which they would have more power or one in which their policy preferences prevail and their constituency is better rewarded. The actions of some parties or leaders who are not principled opponents of democracy, as Linz put it, "tend to be based on the assumption that they might be senior partners in the new coalition, as was the case when von Papen thought that he had engaged Hitler, rather than the other way around" (Linz 1978a, 77). In general, Linz is not optimistic about the propensity of political leaders to abide by systemic considerations in order to save democracy: he tends to think that political leaders will not sacrifice "staunchly held policy goals, the interests of their followers, or their image of a good society for

the sake of persistence of political institutions that do not seem to serve the pursuit of those aims" (Linz 1978a, 53).

If the developments in Italy and Germany during those years justify this pessimistic view, the analysis of the crisis in our survival countries allows a more optimistic view: these countries show, in fact, that sometimes politicians do fight for the persistence of democratic institutions even though this, at least in some cases, does not contribute to increase their own power. Let us see how this has happened in practice.

A Structured, Focused Comparison

An essential part of the exploration of the *political* conditions for a successful defense of democracy, therefore, is the analysis of the options open to the leadership of border parties in crisis times, and the decisions they make in crucial moments. One methodology particularly suited for the analysis of streams of behavior of specific actors through time is process-tracing in the context of a "structured, focused comparison" (George 1979; George and McKeown 1985; George and Bennett 2004).[11] Table 1.2 describes the causal process from polarization to regime outcome, highlighting the steps connecting the initial reactions of the border parties, either in pursuit of their immediate electoral or other interest (which leads them to defect from the government) or, alternatively, in cooperation with the rest of the democratic coalition, thereby giving priority to the defense of the democratic system against (what could become) a lethal challenge. In the two central rows of the table the two paths leading to survival or breakdown of the regime, respectively, are identified. Each step along the paths shows the two possible statuses of dichotomous intervening variables. The bottom row lists the indicators for the operationalization of the explanatory and the intervening variables, which in turn guide data collection.

The empirical and historical analysis in the next chapters follows the scheme outlined in table 1.2 to analyze the reactions of the border parties and the executive to the crisis engendered by the actual and potential electoral successes of antisystem parties. The initial decisions of the border parties trigger a series of systemic consequences, of which the most immediate is the stabilization—in case of their cooperation with the rest of the majority—or destabilization—in case of their defection—of the government at the moment in which maximum stability and coordination is most required to devise and enact a defensive

Table 1.2 Causal Process from Polarization to Regime Outcome

Variables Building the Process	Contextual Variable Polarizing tendencies	Explanatory Variable Strategies of border parties	Intervening Variable Stability of government majority	Intervening Variable Possibility of defensive measures	Intervening Variable Decline in support for challenger	Dependent Variable Regime outcome
Statuses leading to survival	Present	Cooperation	High	Yes	Yes	Survival
Statuses leading to breakdown	Present	Defection	Low	No	No	Breakdown
Indicators		Internal reactions to the emergence of extremists: splits, public declarations of faction leaders, existence and pursuit of political projects for alternative coalitions	Internal cohesiveness of the government: no defections in crucial parliamentary votes (and possibly external support from nonmajority parties); viability of alliances (electoral or other) between the parties in government	Repressive measures: ad hoc legislation and administrative provisions against extremists Accommodative measures: policy concessions and negotiations, appeals to public opinion Existence of vetoes against these coming from sectors of the majority	Electoral setbacks, splits, resignations in extremist party; collapse of previous alliances or other parties with extremist parties	

strategy against the extremists. The destabilization of the government majority renders such decisions extremely difficult—in some cases impossible—thereby pushing the system in the direction of the path leading to breakdown. Indeed, the leadership of the border parties (or, more often, sectors of their leadership) that have been most affected by the electoral successes of the extremists may decide to defect from the political center. The strongest form that strategies of defection can assume is the emergence and pursuit of projects for political alliance between the border party and the extremists in order to provide an alternative government coalition to the current one (column 3 of table 1.2). The absence of such projects (as well as of lesser forms of defection, such as, e.g., minor splits or antigovernment public speeches by the leaders of border parties) stabilizes the government majority (column 4) and gives the government the possibility of defending the system by resorting to specific measures of reaction. Enacting such measures enhances the chances of the survival of democracy, while if it is impossible to enact them, or if the incumbents fail to do so, the challengers will be left free to proliferate and expand their share of the electorate, thereby increasing their chances of taking over the system (columns 5 and 6).

The combination of a typological approach for case selection and a process-tracing procedure for within-case observation structures the comparative analysis carried out in the rest of the book. All selected cases are scrutinized on the same dimensions and facets in order to enhance the comparability of the processes under analysis and, at least for the cases studied here, the cumulability of findings.[12] Obviously, asking the same questions and identifying the same process in all cases does not prevent one from dealing with the idiosyncratic features of each case that may be of particular interest to illuminate the problem studied (George and McKeown 1985, 43).[13]

Outlining the causal chain leading from polarized party system mechanics to a certain regime outcome also facilitates the identification of other actors that may intervene in the political process of defending democracy. In particular, the head of state is a crucial actor in short-term defense. While the effectiveness of the government to react against extremists is largely conditioned by the strategies of border parties, the head of state can generally act with some greater degree of independence. To be sure, in making his choices he cannot normally ignore the general political equilibrium, but in many cases he can be decisive in channeling the crisis towards a particular outcome. More specifically, he can exert influence on several steps of the process charted in table

1.2: influence can be brought to bear on party interplay and the coalition-formation process, and in some cases on the policy choices of the cabinet. Moreover, he can exert independent powers in exceptional situations, where the legal prerequisites for this exist. Finally, he can use his prestige in influencing public opinion in order to regain support in the electorate for the cause of democracy. Thus, the choices of the head of state can be very important in stabilizing or even promoting a difficult coalition between heterogeneous democratic forces, just as they can be decisive in destabilizing such a coalition, as happened in the cases of Belgium and Germany, respectively. Similarly, the analysis of the Finnish and Italian cases shows that the decision by the head of state to use or not use emergency powers in crucial moments of political crises was an influential factor in rendering democratic survival in the respective countries more and less likely, respectively. Various interventions, among which a series of intense appeals to public opinion in favor of a solution to the Sudeten crisis within a democratic framework, constituted an important contribution by the Czechoslovak president to the survival of that democracy.

A last point to mention here before dealing extensively with the matter in chapter 3 is that democratic elites can resort to two kinds of strategies to react in the short term against extremists: repression and accommodation. Repressive measures tend to make the life of extremists more difficult, to make the game they maliciously want to play harder. This is the realm of antiextremist legislation and administrative interventions, of "militant democracy," of the German "*streitbare Demokratie*" postwar tradition—in other words, of a democratic system that actively chooses to limit the extent of its tolerance for its declared enemies.[14] Often, repressive strategies are accompanied by "accommodative" measures intended to incorporate in the regime some of the extremist actors, more specifically sectors of their elites or of their rank and file. Extremist parties or groups are collective actors, and the fact that they are usually led by some charismatic figure does not preclude the existence of faction leaders and subleaders within their ranks: some incorporation strategies can be targeted at precisely those "peripheral" leaders. They can, in fact, be offered policy concessions or other rewards, with the goal of detaching them (and their followers) from the rest of the party, in order to weaken the latter's dangerous potential. Other typical targets of "accommodation" strategies are the rank and file and the electors of antisystem parties: several strategies can be adopted with the goal of attracting them back to a position of loyalty to the system, from ad hoc political propaganda to the creation of special organiza-

tions where extremist followers can find their ideal and/or material interests at least partially satisfied without implying a direct attack on the democratic system.

Of course, whether these strategies succeed or fail is an empirical question. Moreover, the failure of *some* of these strategies can be found in both survival and breakdown cases: the vanity of General Kurt von Schleicher's hopes of exploiting the internal conflict in the NSDAP between Hitler and Strasser is well known (e.g., Bracher 1953; Winkler 1994), but the strategy pursued by President Pehr Evind Svinhufvud of Finland to incorporate in a new controlled organization what was left from the disbanded extreme right-wing Lapua Movement also didn't meet with much success (Rintala 1962a). The emergency decrees issued in the last, convulsive years of the Weimar Republic did not have the effect of restoring public order, but neither could the legislation banning parties in Czechoslovakia be enacted against the extremist *Sudetendeutsche Partei* (e.g., Brügel 1967).

To conclude, defending democracy involves striking a delicate balance between repression and tolerance, exclusion and inclusion: if certain strategies are necessary to preserve democratic rule in the face of an emergency situation, these can very easily be perverted into their opposite, suppressing democratic rule "from above." The conception and enactment of these strategies are political decisions taken by the public authorities, that is, the government in charge or, more generally, the executive (including both the cabinet and the head of state). In a democracy, such decisions are subject to formal constraints and depend on one main political condition: the stability of a sufficiently large democratic front during the crisis. The comparative analysis of the way in which this necessary condition was achieved (or not) and of the nature and effects of defensive strategies in cases that are particularly illuminating for the logic of defending democracy is what this book is about.

The Structure of the Book

The book is structured as follows: chapter 2 analyzes the concept of antisystem party, identifying the defining characteristics relevant for the analysis of, on the one hand, party systems, and on the other, democratic stability and legitimacy, as this study deals with both levels of analysis. The systematic reconstruction of the concept guides case selection at a different level: that of parties within the selected countries. Chapter 3 classifies the strategies of de-

fense of democracy in relation to their time range and their repressive or inclusive nature. Chapters 4, 5, and 6 are devoted to the in-depth analysis of the political crises in Czechoslovakia, Belgium, and Finland, respectively, along the lines of the theoretical framework described in this chapter. They all have a similar structure: the first part of each chapter is devoted to an account of the political developments that led to the rise of the systemic threat and illustrates the strategies of the extremists for political takeover. This is followed by an analysis of the political dynamics within the border parties and the competing projects of their leaders and subleaders, highlighting the difficult choices between direct partisan interests and systemic concerns. Such choices, and the reactions of the head of state in the same circumstances, analyzed in the subsequent section, constitute the main political conditions for the elaboration and enactment of the institutional strategies of democratic defense, mainly by the executive. The concluding section of each chapter classifies and analyzes the defensive strategies adopted. Chapter 7 enlarges the perspective, comparing the political strategies of the border parties and the head of state in the three survival cases, on the one hand, and in Italy in 1922–26 and Germany in 1930–33, on the other. The comparison confirms the hypothesis of the importance of the decisions made by these actors for the success or failure of defensive strategies. Chapter 8 concludes by situating the findings in the context of alternative explanations of regime persistence and change in interwar Europe, discusses their wider theoretical implications, and suggests the priorities for future research in the field.

CHAPTER TWO

The Challenges

Antisystem Parties

Virtually every interwar European democracy had to endure an extremist challenge to its legitimacy, but in some of the cases the nature of the challenge was such that it encouraged defection from the political center at the same time. The extremist challenge was different in each country, and each acted in a different political and institutional system. Conceptualizing those challenges as examples of "antisystem parties" allows us to analyze them comparatively as instances of the same phenomenon. In order to do so, though, it is necessary to clarify the meaning of the concept first.

The concept of "antisystem party" constitutes one of the most important elements of Sartori's theory of party systems. The label, however, has also been used as a synonym for "antidemocratic" or "secessionist" in studies having little to do with party systems but rather with democracy as such (its legitimacy, stability, crisis, etc.). As explained in chapter 1, both levels of analysis are important to investigate the responses of incumbent elites to emerging extremist actors during the regime crises in Europe during the 1920s and the 1930s. Strong and aggressive antisystem parties, in fact, pose a twofold challenge to the democratic system: they not only attack the legitimacy of the regime, but also

impair—via their impact on the party interplay—the very possibility of reaction by the incumbents. Clarifying what an antisystem party is, therefore, is of particular interest, the concept being relevant for both realms of analysis, the regime and the party system. Yet such clarification is very elusive. "Antisystemness," in fact, is a concept that has suffered from considerable "stretching" (Sartori 1970, 1984a), not least precisely because of its undifferentiated application across the study of party systems and in the empirical analysis of broader aspects of the life of democratic regimes.[1] The problem is that the concept of the antisystem party refers to logically different (if, from an empirical perspective, partially overlapping) realities in both fields. In party system analysis, the concept points to the ideological *difference* of one or more parties from the others in the system—a relational criterion—while within the more general analysis of democratic regimes the primary reference is to a party's inherent ideological *character*—a substantive ideological criterion. The former is the original meaning of the concept in Sartori's theory of party systems: in that field, the dimension of comparison of "party anti-systemness" is the *ideological distance* of one party from the others with respect to issues of crucial importance for the regime in which these parties operate (Sartori 1966, 1976, 1982). Often, however, the property of anti-systemness has been assigned to a party on the exclusive basis of the objective content of its ideology with no reference to either its "distance" from the other parties in the system or to the effects on the mechanics of that party system that the presence of such a party is likely to have. In these cases, an antisystem party is simply seen as a threat to that regime, and often as a threat to democracy tout court (e.g., Nettl 1968, 571). In what follows, I disentangle the two different meanings of the concept and the relevant empirical referents, and I use them to select the parties in Czechoslovakia, Finland, and Belgium that qualify for this analysis. In particular, I distinguish between "relational" anti-systemness, which is relevant for the analysis of the dynamics of party interplay, and "ideological" anti-systemness, which is relevant for the empirical analysis of democratic regimes. Parties characterized by the latter trait challenge the existing democratic system; parties displaying the former impair the coordination game of the democratic parties and make defense more difficult. Parties possessing both characteristics are those whose destructive potential for democracy qualifies them for analysis in this book.[2]

The Concept in the Analysis of Party Systems: Relational Anti-systemness

Relational anti-systemness is a party's capability to destabilize the political center (Capoccia 2002a). This is a consequence of a party's extreme ideological difference from the other parties of the system. But let us proceed in order. Sartori offers two definitions of antisystem party, one broad and one narrow. The broad definition is conceived as encompassing all the possible variations in time and space of the attitudes of such parties and their electorates, ranging "from alienation to protest" (Sartori 1976, 132).[3] The various elements brought within this definition have as a minimum common core the *delegitimizing impact* on the regime of the party's propaganda and actions. The narrow definition, by contrast, focuses on the ideological characteristics of the party: "an antisystem party would not change—if it could—the government but the very system of government. Its opposition is . . . an 'opposition of principle.' " (Sartori 1976, 133). While the focus here is on the ideological character of a party, the relational aspect of the definition soon becomes clear as Sartori elaborates the point: "The hard core of the concept is singled out by noting that an antisystem opposition abides by a belief system that does not share the values of the political order *within which it operates.* According to the strict definition, then, antisystem parties represent an extraneous ideology—thereby indicating a polity confronted with a maximal *ideological distance*" (Sartori 1976, 133, emphasis added). Sartori's concept of the antisystem party is thus relational in a twofold sense: first, it involves the ideological distance of a party *from the others* along the political (left-right) space of electoral competition; second, it refers to the delegitimizing impact of the party's actions and propaganda *on the regime in which it operates.* I address these two aspects in turn below.

Ideological Distance and Basic Values

It is important to recognize here that the content of a party's ideology as such does not render it relationally antisystem; what matters is the relationship of that content to the basic values of the regime within which the party operates. In principle, such fundamental values can coincide with basic democratic values (those of any democracy) or they can consist of values and issues that are basic to a specific democratic regime in a specific phase, which are therefore shared by all other (prosystem) relevant parties. Such issues are so salient

that they constitute an important element of the ideological space of electoral competition (Sartori 1976, 334-42). As such, the thrust of the definition is in fact the relation of a party's ideology to the fundamental values of the specific regime in which it operates, rather than the objective content of the party's ideology per se and the political objects that it opposes.

The two characteristics of ideological distance from other parties and opposition to the basic values of a specific regime are reflections of the same reality, that of a party's relational anti-systemness. The logical connection between these two properties is that an antisystem party will oppose some fundamental value of the regime, which, because of its very salience, is shared by all other parties and constitutes a major basis for electoral competition. This puts the antisystem party at one remove on the ideological space with respect to the others, which, in turn, encourages the party to pursue coalition and propaganda strategies that have the effect of pushing the party system towards a polarized mechanics.

The Consequences for Party System Mechanics

The principal characteristics of a polarized party system mechanics can be summarized as multipolarity, space stretching (or disjunction), and centrifugal competition (Di Palma 1977). Although several factors may determine the development of these systemic characteristics, their relationship to the attributes of an antisystem party in particular are summarized in table 2.1. This threefold distinction is, of course, analytical: in any given party system the three characteristics may work together and reinforce one another (Sartori 1976, 140).

The most important characteristic of the antisystem party is that associated with spatial distance (Sani and Sartori 1983; Sartori 1984b). This has consequences at the level of coalition formation, resulting in a low coalition potential, with the antisystem party's radical opposition on important issues serving to isolate the party from the others in the system. "Multipolarity" highlights a further characteristic of polarized party systems, with at least three (left-center-right) poles or clusters of parties, and with a mechanics not based on competition between two coalitions (bipolarity) but rather on a center governing against bilateral oppositions. Among the factors promoting the centrifugal electoral competition characteristic of polarized systems are the delegitimizing messages and outbidding tactics typical of the political propaganda of antisystem parties.[4] Excluded from government coalitions and ideologically

Table 2.1 Attributes of Relational Antisystem Parties and Consequences on Party System Mechanics

Attribute of the Antisystem Party	Systemic Consequence
Large ideological distance from neighboring parties	Unequal spacing between parties (or "space disjunction")
Low coalition potential	Multipolarity
Outbidding propaganda tactics and delegitimizing platform	Centrifugality and increase in polarization

opposed to the regime, antisystem parties develop the potentially rewarding tactic of delegitimizing the system (attacking some of its basic values in their propaganda) and distorting the political market. The latter is accomplished by what Sartori refers to as the politics of "outbidding" or "over-promising"—this is the practice of "irresponsible opposition" (Sartori 1976, 139–40), which itself discourages any centripetal tendencies. In brief, antisystem parties feel they can promise anything in the knowledge that they will never be called upon to make good on their pledges. Their delegitimizing approach serves to sustain centrifugal competition, which, in turn, increases the polarization of the system—that is, the overall ideological distance.[5] Outbidding tactics act in the same way, attracting votes from the electors of the prosystem parties and thus emptying the political center (Daalder 1984, 99, 103).

Relational Anti-systemness

At this stage, the meaning of relational anti-systemness becomes clearer. The relational anti-systemness of a party consists of the three characteristics listed in the left-hand column of table 2.1. These are characteristics of the party per se, although they are defined *in relation to* other entities and are relevant to party system mechanics insofar as they contribute to or even trigger the three consequences listed in the right-hand column, which they are likely to do. The consequences of a party's relational anti-systemness on the party system mechanics are what induce border parties to defect in times of crisis and therefore constitute the heart of the destabilization of the democratic front that makes defense so difficult.[6] In other words, the concept of relational anti-systemness indicates a party's ideological *difference,* which, in spatial terms, amounts to a high ideological distance, from the other parties operating in a particular

regime. Being at a remove on the ideological spectrum normally leads a party to have a very low coalition potential and to use outbidding and delegitimizing tactics in electoral competition. Parties can thus be defined as relationally pro- or antisystem with respect to these characteristics and can be compared on that basis. This is the impact of an antisystem party on party interplay and on the ability of the government to defend the system. As anticipated above, though, part of the literature has used the concept of anti-systemness to refer to a party's intrinsic ideological opposition to the regime. In these cases, the objective content of a party's ideology as such is taken as the defining element of a party's anti-systemness, and a different path of conceptual reconstruction must be followed.

The Concept in the Empirical Analysis of Democratic Regimes: Ideological Anti-systemness

Following Sartori's narrow definition of an antisystem party—"a party that would change, if it could, not the government, but the system of government"—it is evident that while antisystem parties direct their actions towards a radical change of the political system, their goal is, as yet, unrealized. Unlike the relational anti-systemness of a party and its systemic consequences, which are best assessed retrospectively, ideological anti-systemness can therefore only be assessed by way of speculation as to its future intentions. In other words, future (*ex post*) consequences are postulated on the basis of a contemporary (*ex ante*) assessment.[7] At the conceptual level, the main problem arising here emerges when the ideological characteristics of a relationally antisystem party in a given polity are not used to analyze the functioning of the party system, but rather to indicate a challenge to the legitimacy, stability, or consolidation of the system of democracy as such. In fact, the literature is replete with examples of parties being characterized as antisystem on the basis of their intrinsic ideological character (e.g., Daalder 1966a; von Beyme 1972; Smith 1987; Montero 1995; Linz and Stepan 1996; Fennema 1997; Pace 1997; Pollack and Gruegel 1987; Hanson 1998; Lieberman 1998; Keren 2000) without any real reference to how the party differs from others in the system, and hence how its presence is likely to impact on the mechanics of the party system. As such, if anti-systemness is seen as an objective opposition to a given system, then in order to use the concept for comparative analysis it is first necessary to derive an equally objective definition of what that system is. This definition may be

anchored in a specific case, thereby overlapping with the notion of the "regime in which the party operates" and hence with relational anti-systemness. On the other hand, if the concept is to travel for comparative analyses, then this will clearly depend on its acquiring a degree of generality.

In the literature that focuses on the content of the ideology of a party as the basis for its classification as antisystem, the system itself implicitly refers to two objects: some conception of democracy, on the one hand, and/or a territorially bounded unit, on the other. In the former case, the antisystem label is synonymous with antidemocratic; in the latter case, it is synonymous with secessionist or separatist (Smith 1987; Montero 1995). Ideological anti-systemness is therefore normally used as a broad category that encompasses two kinds of parties, the one challenging democracy as such, and the other challenging the territorial boundaries of the polity. While the latter challenge presents relatively fewer problems both of analytical definition and empirical specification, the former poses severe conceptual difficulties in establishing what precisely democracy entails. In the context of interwar European democracies, the task is probably less daunting: it is possible to describe those regimes by a "minimal-procedural" definition of democracy, the last version of which has recently been advanced by Collier and Levitsky (1997, 433–34). This identifies a regime as democratic if it includes the following characteristics: (a) fully contested elections; (b) full suffrage and an absence of overt fraud; (c) effective guarantees of civil liberties; and (d) elected governments that have the capacity to govern.[8] This definition certainly includes all European countries of the interwar years that we have defined as democratic in chapter 1. It should be added, in this context, that characteristic (a) should not be taken rigidly to mean that *all* political forces must be admitted into electoral competition in order to qualify a political system as a democracy: as the analysis below shows, on many occasions democratic rulers resort to limitations on access to elections and on the exercise of political rights in general for antisystem-oriented parties or groups (e.g., Linz 1978a, 6). This, however, is by no means an exclusive characteristic of the countries analyzed in this book, or even of interwar European democracies in general. As explained more diffusely in chapter 3, legal provisions reducing or eliminating rights of political expression and association for parties or groups (or even individuals) that oppose the fundamentals of a democratic regime are typical of many democratic systems, both old and new. Examples of democracies including constitutional or statutory norms limiting free expression and association (as well as other fundamental rights) for politi-

cal reasons are abundant: the Federal Republic of Germany's *streitbare Demokratie* and the U.S. anti-Communist legislation are probably the best-known cases, but similar norms exist in virtually all contemporary democratic states, although of varied extension and intensity (e.g., Fox and Nolte 1995; Finn 2001; Capoccia 2003). In all likelihood, a definition of democracy that entailed the full possibility of expression and association for the proponents of every political opinion as a defining characteristic would have no empirical referent.

Returning to ideological anti-systemness, it is necessary to underline here that the concept refers, by its very nature, to a negative phenomenon—it concerns the question of whether a party opposes a certain political object. As a consequence, a party need not oppose all of the characteristics of the system in question to qualify as being antisystem: opposing only one of them is sufficient. In sum, the ideological conception of anti-systemness is also necessarily related to a concept of system, but in a different way, and to a different system, than is the case with relational anti-systemness. This difference is crucial when the concept of antisystem party is used in comparative analyses, since the two meanings should be disentangled, and then used for the purpose that they best serve. Relational anti-systemness is relevant when it comes to the comparative analysis of the functioning of party systems. Ideological anti-systemness, standing for opposition to democracy or for secessionism,[9] is an important conceptual tool to analyze the challenges faced by democracy. Here, both are important, as they constitute the criteria to select the parties on which the analyses concentrate.

Classification of the Cases

Thus, the influence of an antisystem party on party system mechanics, on the one hand, and on the stability and legitimacy of the democratic system, on the other, should be understood separately. As explained in chapter 1, both ideological and relational anti-systemness are important in selecting which parties constitute the challenges to be investigated in this analysis: the former because it highlights a party's principled opposition to the fundamentals of a democratic regime, and the latter because it underlines the ability of a party to trigger polarization and centrifugal tendencies in the mechanics of the party system, thereby hampering systemic defense.

The property of ideological anti-systemness, as clarified above, is necessarily linked to a certain definition of democracy, which defines the spatial and

temporal scope of the comparison. In the present analysis, this aspect does not present particular problems: the cases selected for analysis certainly satisfy the "minimal" definition of democracy mentioned above. Furthermore, the analysis of ideological anti-systemness highlights the importance of *ex post* versus *ex ante* evidence for the assessment of this property. The cases of the Nazis (*Nationalsozialistische Deutsche Arbeiterpartei,* NSDAP) in Weimar Germany and Fascists (*Partito Nazionale Fascista,* PNF) in pre-Fascist Italy, therefore, can obviously be classified as ideological antisystem parties on the basis of an *ex post* judgment.

For the classification of the unsuccessful (albeit dangerous) antisystem parties and groups in Belgium, Czechoslovakia, and Finland, *ex post* evidence is obviously not available, so their classification as such is based on an *ex ante* judgment of the incompatibility of the "controlling goals" of these parties—that is, of their main ideological principles with either democracy or the territorial unity of the state, or both. An analysis of the ideological principles and main political goals of the parties active in the countries mentioned above, conducted via an examination of party sources (programs, declarations of leaders, positions of intellectuals close to the leaderships, the party press, and party publications) enables us to classify the parties listed in the left-hand column of table 2.2 as ideologically antisystem. It should be noted that some of these parties were either banned or changed attitude towards the system during the interwar years: hence, the name of each party is followed by the period, in parentheses, for which the classification is valid.

Although all parties listed in the left-hand column in general constituted problems for their immediate "spatial neighbors," not all of them displayed the characteristic of relational anti-systemness. In other words, only some of those parties—those listed in the right-hand column—given their size and adoption of centrifugal electoral tactics, had the potential (even if not all succeeded) to trigger the emergence of projects of reaggregation of the political supply involving the potential defection of sectors of the governing majority, thereby making defense difficult and breakdown more likely. As shown in the following chapters, the initial success and later failure of such projects led to the collapse of democracy in Italy and Germany, while the success of the democrats' alternative projects determined the survival of democracy in the other cases.

Thus, the concepts of ideological and relational anti-systemness drive the second level of case selection in this study, that of parties within countries.

Table 2.2 Antisystem Parties in Czechoslovakia, Belgium, and Finland

Country	Ideologically Antisystem Parties	Relationally Antisystem Parties[a]
Czechoslovakia	All Sudeten German parties (1920–22)	SdP (1933–38)
	DNSAP and DNP (1920–33)	KSČ (1921–38)
	SdP (1933–38)	
	KSČ (1921–38)	
	NOF (1929–38)	
	NU (1935–38)	
	Some smaller (ethnic) parties	
Belgium	Rexist Party (1936–39)	Rexist Party (1936–39)
	VNV (1933–39)	VNV (1933–39)
	PCB (1921–39)	
Finland	Communist Party (1919–31)	Communist Party (1919–31)
	NC (1929–35)	NC (1929–35)
	IKL (1933–39)	IKL (1933–39)

Note: See Appendix A for the full names of the parties.
[a] Among the ideologically antisystem parties listed at left.

Parties that only qualify as ideologically antisystem constitute a danger, or at least a nuisance, for democratic governments, but parties that are also relationally antisystem constitute the real challenges, and it is on such cases that the case-study chapters mainly concentrate. In Czechoslovakia several ideologically antisystem parties were active, many of which were ethnically based. However, after the decision of most German parties in the early 1920s to cooperate with the Republic, the most serious ethnically based challenge came in the form of the Henlein's *Sudetendeutsche Partei* (SdP) in the period after 1933, and the chapter focuses almost exclusively on the political reactions to it. The Czechoslovak Communists are included in the analysis only in passing, since, despite being large enough to disrupt the party interplay at the left end of the political spectrum and their adoption of quite aggressive propaganda for several years, they never managed to break their constant political isolation at all levels and were therefore never as dangerous as the Sudeten German nationalists were in the late 1930s. The other antisystem parties never reached sufficient size to create the temptation for sectors in the political center to defect. What follows is an essential description of the ideological characteristics of these parties, while their tactics to attack the system are analyzed in the

case studies. In Belgium, the main challenger of the democratic system was the Rexist Party, with its radical opposition to parliamentarism and democracy, its aggressive character, and its fast electoral success, and it is the main focus of chapter 5. The development and tactics of the Flemish-based, Catholic VNV (*Vlaams Nationaal Verbond,* or Flemish National League), however, are also briefly covered, as this party constituted a further problem for the democratic establishment (especially the Catholic Party) and influenced their interaction with Rex. In Finland, democracy was threatened by the Communists during the 1920s and the extreme right during the 1930s, and both challenges are analyzed in the relevant chapter.

Czechoslovakia

In the First Czechoslovak Republic, the challenge of antisystem parties twice reached a peak of about one third of the parliamentary seats in the lower chamber: in the early 1920s and in 1935–38. In both cases the threat was mainly posed by parties representing ethnic minorities, which did not recognize the boundaries of the new Czechoslovak state; in the later period, however, this territorially based challenge had strong external backing in the Nazi Reich and required a much more determined defensive strategy. Comparatively, the challenge from the "national" extreme right was weaker in Czechoslovakia: the Czech Fascists never constituted a serious threat to Czechoslovak democracy. On the extreme left, the Communists reached a more substantial level of strength.

Starting with the latter party, the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia (*Komunistická Strana Československá,* or KSČ) was created in 1921 after an internal struggle in the Social Democratic Party. The birth of the KSČ came in a delicate moment for the Republic and constituted the first serious crisis after 1920 (Zinner 1963; Wheaton 1986). The history of the KSČ as an independent party begins at its unification congress at the end of 1921, in which all "national" Communist wings unified into one political force. Although electorally strong (around 10 percent of the seats),[10] and certainly ideologically opposed to democracy (e.g., Smeral 1925a and b), its impact on the political system of Czechoslovakia was not proportionate to its strength, especially in the first decade of the party's existence. More precisely, the evolution of the KSČ in the First Republic can be divided into three phases. In the first phase, between 1921 and 1929, the Comintern exerted continuing pressure to "bolshevize" the party, an operation that was concluded in 1929, despite some internal resistance,

when the revolutionary left wing of the party, led by Klement Gottwald and composed mainly of younger cadres supported by the Comintern, definitively took over at the Fifth Congress in February of that year.[11] Gottwald's leadership, characterized by the adoption of more orthodox revolutionary tactics and by a radicalization of the official positions of the party on a series of issues, marked the second phase of the life of the KSČ, which lasted until 1935, when the Comintern changed its policy towards the rise of Fascism in Europe (Zinner 1963, 53). The post-1935 Comintern tactic of pushing Communist parties into collaboration with other left-wing groups to form popular fronts to avoid the victory of the extreme right were also felt in Czechoslovakia, although these never led to open collaboration between the KSČ and the Socialists (Felak 1990).[12] Officially, the new KSČ line was "defense of the Republic and continuation of the class struggle." Despite its official rhetoric, the party supported the election of Beneš to the presidency in 1935 and spending on rearmament after 1936. The Republic didn't last long enough to allow fruitful collaboration between the left-wing forces to develop, although the need to defend the Republic was often mentioned in the official speeches of Communist leaders between 1935 and 1938 (Zinner 1963, 56).

Also antidemocratic were the Czech Fascists (*Národni obec fašistická,* NOF), present in Parliament after 1929, and the conservative National Democracy after its ideological turn in 1934, when extremist elements took over its leadership (Lipscher 1979a). National Democracy changed its name for the elections of 1935 into National Union (NU) following an alliance with two minor extreme right-wing groups. The main programmatic characteristic of NU was the advocacy of a corporatist state. In general, any direct reference to autocratic government was soft-pedaled in the party leaders' public statements, not least because of strict legislation limiting antidemocratic expression in political propaganda, which was passed between 1933 and 1936: in the context of those limitations, public support for a corporatist organization of representation was the closest that one could get to advocating a nondemocratic regime (Brügel 1967, 246). The political project of National Democracy to organize a large social block under a corporatist-authoritarian banner (they were overtly inspired by the Polish system under Pilsudski) failed, obtaining only 5.7% of the seats in the 1935 elections. The Czech Fascists obtained only 1% and 2% of the seats in 1929 and 1935, respectively.[13] While the presence of these parties certainly constituted a nuisance with respect to the stability of the republic, the

Czech-based extreme right never seriously endangered the survival of Czechoslovak democracy.

All of the parties representing the ethnic minorities living in Czechoslovak territory were opposed to the legitimacy of the new state in the early 1920s. Soon, however, most of the parties representing the largest minority group, the Sudeten Germans, abandoned these positions. In 1921–22 the German minority parties were divided into the "activists," which acknowledged the Czechoslovak state and agreed to abide by democratic principles, and the "negativists," whose opposition to the Czechoslovak Republic was accompanied by antidemocratic and nationalist orientations. The main negativist formations were the Sudeten German Nationalist Party (*Deutsche Nationalistische Partei,* DNP), and the Sudeten German National-Socialist Party of Labor (*Deutsche Nationalsozialistische Arbeiterpartei,* DNSAP). After 1933, Henlein's Sudeten German Home Front, later renamed the *Sudetendeutsche Partei,* took up their political heritage.

While there were ideological differences between the DNP and the DNSAP, both parties were radically opposed to democracy. The Sudeten German DNSAP maintained close connections with the German NSDAP, and its leaders participated in the latter's congresses in Germany before Hitler came to power. In the 1920s, in fact, the German Nazi movement looked more like one party with three branches: German, Austrian, and Sudeten German. The DNP was older than the DNSAP and its opposition to democracy was based on a traditionalist ideology. The party opposed with equal vehemence the legitimacy of the Czechoslovak Republic: its leader, Lodgman von Auen, was an inveterate enemy of the Czechoslovak state. As he declared in Parliament in 1922, "He who does not believe that it is the supreme duty of the German deputies to commit high treason against this state, is in error" (quoted in Rothschild 1974; see Simon 1954 for a collection of von Auen's speeches). While the DNP and the DNSAP moderated the tone of their propaganda somewhat during the second half of the 1920s, their basic ideological position did not change: they tenaciously maintained their anti-Czech, anti-Jewish, and German-nationalist positions.[14]

The DNSAP and DNP were dissolved by the government in 1933, but they were immediately replaced by the *Sudetendeutsche Heimatsfront* (SHF)—later the *Sudetendeutsche Partei*—an organization led by Konrad Henlein, chief of the *Deutsche Turnverein,* or the German Gym Association (Jahn 1938). In

previous years, Henlein had founded a cultural association named *Kameradschaftsbund* (KB), which was heavily influenced by the ideas of the Austrian philosopher Othmar Spann, considered the official ideologue of the Austrian *Heimwehr* (Carsten 1976). Spann and his followers advocated, on the basis of a traditional and holistic view of society, a corporatist authoritarian system with the abolition of parliamentarism and party pluralism. The pages of the official magazine of the KB, called *Die junge Front,* showed a clear adherence to antidemocratic ideas (Brügel 1967). The direct offspring of the KB, by 1934 the SHF already had close contacts with the German Nazi government, although Henlein took particular care, especially in the first years after the foundation of the party, to conceal his antidemocratic and German-nationalist political objectives, which would become fully clear in 1937–38. Finally, it is worth mentioning that, although they never constituted a systemic threat in their own right, most of the tiny Hungarian and Polish parties representing their minorities took negativist positions, especially in the very first years of the Republic, while the representatives of each small group later held different positions in respect to the recognition of the Czechoslovak state.[15]

Belgium

The Belgian Communist Party (*Parti Communiste de la Belgique,* PCB), while abiding by orthodox Communist principles and refusing any cooperation with other left-wing parties, at least until the second half of the 1930s,[16] did not constitute a threat to democracy in Belgium in its own right, never gaining more than 4.5 percent of the seats in the period analyzed here. More serious were the challenges coming from Rex and the VNV, in no small part because, despite the differences between them, their respective leaders formed an agreement in 1937, when the two parties were at the peak of their success.

The VNV was established in 1933 under the leadership of Staf de Clercq, who unified all Flemish organizations, which, whether strong, like the old *Frontpartij,* or weak, like the many regional and local groups, had always operated separately. The new group displayed a marked ideological change from the Flemish movement of the 1920s, which opposed the Belgian state but was democratic (Clough 1945). The VNV, on the contrary, had an authoritarian, corporatist, and antiparty ideology. It sought the reunification of Flanders and the Netherlands under a corporate-authoritarian political order, which would have kept it free from disorderly democracy. Financed by Hitler, the movement adopted the *Führerprinzip* as well as the militias, uniforms, salutes,

parades of the well-known Nazi model. Many of its leaders overtly showed great sympathy for the Nazi regime (Stengers 1965; Schepens 1980).[17]

The Rexist program, advocating "physical and moral reform of the nation," was published in February 1936 (see Narvaez 1961 [1936], 134–35 for the full version; see also Degrelle 1936, 1937, 1941; Daye 1937; Degrelle and Dannau 1973; Brasillach 1936, 1969). In the social realm, the party advocated reforms directed against financial capitalism: rigorous control of banks, protection for the middle and working classes and for smaller enterprises, respect for labor, creation of new industries to fight unemployment, prohibition of employment for married women, and a return to agriculture (the issue of whether land would have to be expropriated was never fully clarified). It supported a corporatist order in order to achieve "class solidarity" based on traditional Catholic values (Étienne 1968, 73-74; Colignon 1994). Where Rex showed its ideologically antisystem tendencies more clearly was in the more genuinely political part of the program. The Rexist view was that political parties had sown national discord and should be destroyed since they were dominated by corrupt politicians, themselves lorded over by an anonymous oligarchy. Both politicians and oligarchs, according to Rex, were to blame for the numerous politico-financial scandals that riddled the country during the 1930s. Parliament should only sit for a couple of months a year, to ratify the budget and the main laws only. Moreover, plural voting ("integral family voting") should be introduced, in the form of a second vote for families with more than four children (Brustein 1988). The government should not be responsible to the parliament but to the king, who would appoint and dismiss the ministries. Unlike other extreme right movements, Rex explicitly refused to use political violence. Its uniformed squads always remained unarmed, and it clearly expressed its will to attain power through legal methods only. As is shown in chapter 5, this did not make it any less of a danger to the persistence of the democratic system (on the ideology of Rex in general, see Carsten 1976; Vandromme 1978; Laurent 1979).

Finland

The Communist challenge to Finnish democracy was particularly dangerous in the 1920s, when both underground and public Communist organizations existed in the country. In August 1918, the Finnish Communist Party (*Suomen Kommunistinen Puolue,* SKP) was founded in Moscow, with the explicit goal of "the destruction of the bourgeois state, and not the establishment of democracy either before or through the revolution"; rather, "the iron dic-

tatorship of workers must be established" (quoted in Upton 1973, 115–16). In this early phase, the Communists' strategy was to restrict their action to purely revolutionary and underground tactics, which would prepare an armed revolution to establish a Communist regime in Finland, while "the old parliamentary, trade union, cooperative struggle" was openly condemned. Relying on purely underground and revolutionary tactics soon proved inadequate, though: the SKP encountered difficulties in building a stable base and support among Finnish workers, and very soon the party, mainly under the influence of Otto Kuusinen, one of the most important leaders and theoreticians of Finnish and international Communism, diversified its strategy.[18] On the one hand, the underground work proceeded, and a network of cells was built. On the other hand, the underground work was complemented with "public" propaganda and proselytizing activities: thus, Communist representatives participated in workers' organizations, taking many of them over, and at the same time a "public" Communist party, called the Finnish Socialist Workers' Party (*Suomen Sosialistinen Työväenpuolue,* SSTP), was created.

Despite this diversification of tactics and the participation in the mechanisms of democratic pluralism, in its doctrinal and practical evolution over the following twenty years, neither the SKP nor its affiliate party organizations on the Finnish territory ever renounced the aim of destroying liberal democracy. Needless to say, the geographical proximity of Russia rendered these projects quite realistic (Billington 1964; Hodgson 1967).[19]

The parliamentary strength of the Finnish Communists oscillated around (and often above) the 10-percent mark, rendering them an important actor in the party interplay and a constant electoral and political threat to the Social Democratic Party. Moreover, the Communist challenge to both the Social Democrats' constituency and to Finnish democracy was even more powerful than its parliamentary representation suggests. Even without considering their underground network of cells, the Communists were hegemonic in many of the workers' associations and the national trade union confederation *Suomen Ammattijärjestö* (SAJ), where the Social Democratic faction was a minority. In their successful takeover of these associations, the Communists could rely not only on the organizational and propaganda skills of the leaders operating clandestinely in Finland, but also on widespread worker resentment of the "White" government. Among these workers, dissatisfaction with the moderate, compromise-oriented politics of the Social Democratic Party ran high, so

Communist propaganda easily found fertile ground. This was not the only reason that the government often took repressive measures against the Communists: in the eyes of "bourgeois" public opinion, the presence of the Soviet Union on the eastern national border multiplied the actual danger for the Finnish constitutional order posed by the Communists. In fact, the offices of the central organs of the SKP were located in Soviet territory, so the accusation that the Finnish Communists were directed from abroad, one that often appeared in the "bourgeois" press, was not entirely unfounded.[20]

Whatever the extent of the Communist threat, in all likelihood the extreme right represented the most urgent danger for Finnish democracy in the interwar years. This was mainly due to the actions of the "Lapua Movement," which had enormous impact on the choices and strategies of the governmental parties between 1929 and 1932. The main political aim of the Lapua Movement in its first phase was the destruction of Communism in Finland by any means. To this end, it exerted pressure on the cabinet and on the bourgeois parliamentary majority to pass anti-Communist legislation. The core idea underlying the so-called Law of Lapua (*Lapuan Laki*)—the main concept in the Movement's ideology—was that if institutions were hesitant or refused to comply with this fundamental request, then the Movement should take direct action in order to destroy Communism. The Movement's main goal was the survival of an independent "White" Finland, free from the dangers represented by the Communists. Everything, including political violence, was acceptable in ensuring this outcome. This intention was clearly spelled out in the official documents that emerged from the early meetings of the Movement.[21] In the less than three years of the existence of the Lapua Movement, political violence against opponents was its clear trademark. It was very difficult for the state to maintain public order.

After Communist organizations were definitively disbanded in 1930, the Lapua Movement advocated the outlawing of the Social Democratic Party, declaring itself quite prepared to attack the Finnish state to achieve this goal. These goals were explicitly stated in Lapua's Tampere Program, approved by the Movement in 1932. While this certainly represented a qualitative shift in the political goals of the Lapuans, there were also elements of continuity between the two ideological phases of the Movement. The Movement's anti-Communist position was one of the consequences of a quite simplistic mode of political thought that was opposed both to democracy and modernity, at

least in its political sense. In fact, Lapua's ideology is best defined as an expression of "rural traditionalism," rejecting not only Communism but also democracy as extraneous elements (Alapuro 1980; Upton 1981; Poulsen 1987).

Lapua was not a party, and it did not compete in elections under an independent label. However, it did have a substantial impact on Finnish democratic institutions from within, and more specifically on party interplay in parliament. This was possible thanks to the Movement's strong influence on the conservative party, National Coalition (NC), during the political crisis of the early 1930s. Members and representatives of the other bourgeois parties belonged to the Lapua Movement as well—many Lapuans, for example, were members or supporters of the Agrarian and Swedish People's parties—but this tendency was particularly strong in the NC, in which it extended substantially to the party elites (e.g., Puntila 1953, 9). Although being one of the founding parties of the "White" Republic, the attitude of the NC towards parliamentary democracy was quite ambiguous. Like other conservative parties of the time, the NC did not have a clear-cut ideology (Borg 1965, 1966; Nouisianen 1971). In the NC, liberal-conservative elements coexisted with politicians of more overt authoritarian inclination, and after 1929 the latter prevailed. When the emergence of the Lapua Movement brought the political elimination of the Communists onto the country's political agenda, the NC was the most enthusiastic supporter of the Movement and its goals, while the other bourgeois parties were more reluctant to take any firm stand. Moreover, when the Lapua Movement turned explicitly against the Social Democratic Party and the democratic state, all the other bourgeois parties distanced themselves decisively from the Movement, while the majority of the NC did not. Thus, for all practical purposes the NC can be considered the main party outlet of the Lapua Movement for the whole period of its existence, between 1929 and 1932, hence its inclusion in table 2.2.

The political heritage of the Lapua Movement was taken up by the extreme right-wing Patriotic People's Movement (*Isänmaallinen Kansanliike,* IKL). The ideology of the IKL, as it emerged from the guiding principles of the party stated in its founding convention of June 1932, can be defined as hypernationalistic and totalitarian. The core concept of the party's worldview was expressed by the term *kansakokoinasuus,* a literal translation of the German *Volksgemeinschaft,* which was one of the pillars of Nazi ideology. The Finnish term was used with exactly the same organic, holistic meaning as its German counterpart and was inserted into its millenarian conception of history. The

IKL saw itself as operating during one of the great crises of history: individualistic and selfish liberalism was dying, and a new conception of individuals was emerging, one in which duty towards society trumped individual rights. Similarly, the organic unity of society would replace the conflict caused by the regime of parties, while the concept of nation as an organic living entity would supersede those of individual and class. The concepts of individual rights and of class interest would be abandoned, which would allow the creation of a powerful and unique executive authority, one not responsible to parliament. Parties would no longer exist, and a corporative system, following the example of Fascist Italy, would replace political representation (Rintala 1962a; Kalela 1976; Heinonen 1980).[22]

The achievement of a fully fledged status of *Volksgemeinschaft* for the Finnish nation was, in turn, conceived as a means to achieve the even higher goal of "Greater Finland," that is, the unification under one government of all Finnish-speaking people (historical Finland plus the regions of East Karelia, Kola, Ingria, and, in some versions of this ideal, also Estonia). This was one of the most important ideals of most of the extreme right-wing groups and associations—most important of all, the Academic Karelia Society (Rintala 1965)—in Finland in the interwar period.[23] Although the IKL members and leaders wore party uniforms, in general the party abstained from the use of violence for political ends. The danger of being banned, given the fate of the Communists and the Lapuans, was at that moment extremely real. The IKL also had a youth organization modeled on the Italian Fascist *Balilla* and the German *Hitlerjugend* in its organizational structures and practices.

The influence of the IKL on party interplay went well beyond what its own parliamentary representation (7 percent at its peak) would have allowed: in fact, almost immediately after its creation in 1932, the IKL managed to take over the NC, providing itself with a cover of respectability. On the basis of the IKL's claim of being "above parties," which allowed its members—even its leaders—to be affiliated with other groups, the party managed to place its men within the governing bodies of the NC, thereby transforming it into a loyal supporter of its own antisystem goals. As early as November 1932, the NC's Central Committee approved a resolution as follows: "The Central Committee confirms that the great majority of the party are unconditional supporters of the Patriotic People's Movement. The party must therefore be led in the spirit of the Patriotic People's Movement to a greater extent and more clearly than before, and the party's election campaigning must be planned with this in

mind" (quoted in Rintala 1962a, 233). After the approval of this resolution, old conservative leaders and members left the NC, thereby strengthening the IKL's grip.[24] The NC would free itself from the strangling embrace of the IKL and go back to a line of a classical conservatism respectful of legality and parliamentarism only in 1935–36 (Tuominen 1970; Rintala 1969).

To sum up, after selecting the most relevant countries for this analysis in chapter 1, via our reconstruction of the concept of antisystem party, we have now selected the parties that constituted the main challenges for the Czechoslovak, Finnish, and Belgian democracies according to the criteria spelled out in the theoretical framework. Before moving on to the case studies, one part of the theoretical framework is still missing: the strategies to defend democracy from its attackers. This is the subject of the next chapter.

CHAPTER THREE

The Defense

Strategies against Extremism

What instruments are at the disposal of democratic incumbents to react to extremist challenges that threaten to take over the democratic system and turn it into something else? The existing empirical literature is not of great help in answering this question: while some country-studies on this topic exist, in general they pay little attention to comparability or cumulability of knowledge. Comparative analyses are rare and often atheoretical (e.g., Canu 1996). Often discussed for its normative implications on what is desirable to support the cause of democracy, this question has received relatively little attention from a theoretical point of view. In this chapter I offer a definition of "defense of democracy" and build a typology of defensive strategies. Then I discuss the four "polar" strategies (repression, incorporation, purge, education), focusing in particular on the first two, the most relevant in the context of this book.

Strategies of Defense of Democracy: A Typology

The concept of "defense of democracy" encompasses all activities, be they formal provisions or political strategies, that are explicitly and directly under-

taken to protect the democratic system from the threat of its internal opponents. This definition, although broad, excludes reactions against external opponents, as in the case of war, as well as, for example, more "indirect" actions such as the promotion of economic development or literacy that, according to some, might contribute, if not to the existence of democracy, to its "quality," however measured (e.g., Diamond 1992). The definition and the typology focus on reactions to extremism by institutional (mainly state) actors, and therefore excludes civil society reactions against extremism.[1]

The intension of the concept can be ordered in a two-dimensional property space, on the basis of the prevailing exclusive-repressive or inclusive-educational nature of the defensive strategies, and on the basis of the time range of their political objective, short- or long-term. Given the complexity of the matter, two notes of caution are in order at this stage: first, these two distinctions are not strictly dichotomous, and rather express prevalence of one status on the other. Repressive measures against certain actors might exert indirect nonrepressive effects on other actors, while inclusive measures may not be totally devoid of repression. The distinction between short- and long-term measures identifies a prevailing time frame—that is, by what time the proposed objective of strengthening democracy is to be achieved according to the designs of the defenders. Thus, saying that a certain defensive measure is aimed at achieving short-term effects by no means excludes the possibility that the same measure will also have longer-term effects, and vice versa. The second note of caution refers to the examples given for the four main types of defensive strategies: these do not aim to constitute an exhaustive list of strategies of defense in all possible times and contexts. Such an enterprise would necessitate a major detour from the topic of this book. Especially for the short-term strategies, most of the examples refer to the kind of measures that were typical of interwar European democracies.

The focus of this chapter is on short-term measures of defense, which aim to stem the development of an existing challenge, to prevent its snowballing—in short, to stop it from taking over the system. Their declared immediate goal is democratic survival, especially in the worst cases, such as those analyzed in this book. This is not the focus of long-term defensive measures, which attempt to reinforce and stabilize the basic procedures and values of the democratic system—in other words, to help its consolidation.[2]

Table 3.1 identifies four "polar" types of strategy of defense, labeled "militancy," "incorporation," "purge," and "education." *Militancy* refers to those

Table 3.1 Conceptual Reconstruction of "Defense of Democracy"

Nature of measures	Time range of the objective: Short-term	Time range of the objective: Long-term
Repressive	Militancy	Purge
Accommodative	Incorporation	Education

strategies, normally based on formal legislation but also consisting of interventions in the realm of "invisible" politics (Bobbio 1978), which try to curb, de jure or de facto, the political and civil rights of certain subjects on the basis of their political opinions or activities, which have been defined as harmful to the survival of the democratic system. *Incorporation* strategies are those which endeavor to bring into the system parts of the extremist opposition, thereby simultaneously weakening the extremist camp and increasing the legitimacy of the regime and the support for it. *Purge* strategies, often adopted after the transition to democracy from an authoritarian regime, involve enhancing the real or perceived legitimacy of the government by, for example, ensuring the systemic loyalty of bureaucrats or prosecuting the authors of political crimes connected with the previous regime. *Education* strategies, on the other hand, seek to strengthen democratic values and beliefs, as well as democratic practices at different levels, as in the case of activities labeled "democracy protection" or "democracy aid." The area in the table falling between the four cells in the corners convey the idea, mentioned above, that the types in question are polar types—that is, are unlikely to fit perfectly with their empirical referent. Rather, the examples given below, and even more concrete defensive measures adopted in each country will fall more or less close to one of the corners of the table, depending on their prevailing characteristics. A final note on terminology, before moving to the analysis of the types of strategy: the terms used to label the four polar strategies, in particular "purge" and "education," although seemingly value-laden, should not be seen in this light. On the contrary, their choice was driven by the lack of more "neutral" terms (for example, substituting "cleansing" or "purification" for "purge" would not have been much bet-

ter) that would still convey what the concept is about; they do not imply any normative judgment, apart from the general preference for democracy over nondemocracy made explicit in chapter 1.

Strategies to Defend Democracy in the Long Run: General Observations

This chapter concentrates its attention on short-term strategies of democratic defense, that is, those enacted against a *present* systemic challenge, and falling in the gray-colored area of table 3.1. It seems advisable, though, since this exercise has never been attempted before, to make some general bird's-eye observations on long-term strategies too, before moving to a more detailed typological analysis of the short-term strategies, which we will then apply to the case studies.

The Repressive Strategies: Purges

These strategies are normally enacted by passing and implementing rules with the goal of reinforcing the core of the state institutional and bureaucratic machinery by protecting it from extremist influence and reaffirming its loyalty to the government. Table 3.2 offers an overview of specific purge strategies, including the particular aspect of the extremist threat are intended to address and their intended outcome.

Both before and after World War II, many European democracies featured rules on the political loyalty of bureaucrats. Probably the most famous, studied, and controversial case is that of the *Berufsverbot* in West Germany, initiated by the "Adenauer decree" of September 1950, which established that all public employees demonstrate with their behavior their loyalty (*Treue*) to the liberal-democratic order. The decree listed thirteen organizations, including the Communist Party and other extreme left-wing groups, the support of any of which would lead to dismissal from service (Dyson 1975). The issue remained virtually dormant, and the decree largely unimplemented, for several years, until the issue reemerged in the political debate of the early 1970s, which led to the well-known "radicals decree" of the minister-presidents (regional presidents) in January 1972, on the basis of which only those who "offered the guarantee to respect in any moment the liberal-democratic order" could become a public official. In the intentions of its proponents, the decree in question was meant to react to the strategy of the "long march through the

Table 3.2 Strategies on Bureaucratic-Institutional Machinery

Defensive Strategy	Particular Threat Addressed	Goal
Legislation against disloyalty by public officials	Undermined loyalty of bureaucracy	Ensure loyalty of bureaucratic structures
Legislation against incitement to disaffection among armed forces	Undermined loyalty of sectors of armed forces	Ensure loyalty of armed forces
Lustration policies	Nondemocratic members of bureaucracy supporting antidemocratic political projects	Ensure loyalty of bureaucratic structures after transition
"Retroactive" trials	Influential actors supporting antidemocratic political projects	Punish perpetrators of violations of human rights during previous regime
Truth commissions	Waning of memory of past crimes; continuing conflict between factions	Establish responsibility of members of previous regime for past crimes

institutions" adopted by some left-wing extremist groups in order to undermine them from within (Bilstein 1975).[3] The vagueness of the decree allowed substantial leeway in the interpretation and subsequent implementation of the rules in the individual cases and across different *Länder,* which gave rise to innumerable controversies (e.g., Bethge and Rossmann 1973). Rules on the loyalty of public officials also exist in other European democracies, generally less pervasive than in Germany, although more subtle, informal discrimination, especially for some particularly delicate positions, has been widespread (von Beyme 1984).

If rules of this kind can be found in several established democracies (e.g., Tomuschat 1981), they are also very common in new democratic regimes, in which the new rulers often adopt repressive measures to cleanse the sectors of the state administration that were most closely associated with the previous nondemocratic system—the "lustration" policies (Loś 1995).[4] Such policies range from identifying and publicly exposing collaborators or officials of a previous nondemocratic regime to barring them from employment in posi-

tions of public influence—normally in the national parliament and government and the state administration. Their immediate objective is to neutralize the influence of people still connected with the previous regime, who could undermine the stability and the legitimacy of the new, and to reestablish the bureaucratic apparatus of the state by staffing it with personnel whose loyalty to the new order is not in doubt. Lustration measures thus reduce the civil and political rights of some individuals, and pursue, in addition to the goal of ensuring a supportive, or at least loyal, state apparatus, also that of keeping a clear distance from past violations of human rights (Boed 1999).[5] Although lustration policies are not always easy to implement, they are often attempted, and are successful or unsuccessful in varying measure, constituting a very important passage for many democratizing countries. Purges of the bureaucracies of the previous regimes were undertaken in the democracies that emerged from the defeated Fascist powers of World War II (e.g., Henke and Woller 1991); more recently, most members of the former Soviet bloc resorted to lustration measures in their path to democratization.[6]

A further repressive strategy apt to enhance the legitimacy of a democratic regime, especially in the long term (even though there are also short-term effects on the legitimacy of the new regime), is that of bringing to trial the authors of violations of human rights in the previous nondemocratic regime. "Retroactive justice," that is, prosecuting the state officials (members of the army, the police, etc.) who violated human rights before democracy was established is a way for the new rulers to distance themselves from the previous regime's crimes and thereby obtain and/or sustain legitimacy for the new political order, as well as to purge the state apparatuses of disloyal and still potentially dangerous figures.[7]

A milder "purge" strategy that can be considered as sharing the logic of trials is that of establishing a "truth commission" immediately after a transition to democracy. Truth commissions are bodies set up to investigate past violations of human rights, including violations by the military or other government forces, or by armed opposition forces. One of the main purposes of such commissions is to stabilize the new regime by "healing the wounds of the past" (Hayner 1994, 600). Generally, truth commissions are charged with investigating a certain past period of time to reveal the crimes of state and governmental authorities during the previous regime and establish an unbiased and accurate record of the country's past (Yoder 1999). Only rarely have truth commissions provided the basis for prosecutions of the violators of

human rights—or even recommended prosecution or forwarded their files to the courts. Although a few important exceptions to this rule exist, prosecutions have usually been avoided, even when the identity of violators and the extent of their crimes have been made public.[8] However, this should not lead us to underestimate the importance of such commissions for democratic legitimacy, especially in the long term. On the one hand, the establishment of truth commissions symbolically supports the new regime, distancing it clearly from the abuses of the past; on the other, it fulfills the need of victims for acknowledgment, thereby winning or reinforcing their consent for the new regime (Goldstone 1996, 492).[9] The decision on whether to prosecute the violators or to declare an amnesty is an entirely political one, although the latter is much more frequent than the former (Walsh 1996, 111–12). In the last twenty-five years, truth commissions have been established in twelve Central/Latin American and African countries (Hayner 1994). A similar commission was also set up in Germany (Yoder 1999).

The Accommodative Strategies: Education for Democracy

The connection between some form of civic education and democracy has a long history. From a normative point of view, the conception of democracy as political representation has given a central role to the relationship between education and citizen training (e.g., Torres 1998). At a more general level, mass education was historically a crucial component of the nationalization and democratization processes in most European nation-states (e.g., Meyer, Ramirez, and Soysal 1992). In this perspective, the development of mass schooling has not only socialized individuals to a civic culture but also created a general public. In Meyer's words, "education restructures whole populations, creating and expanding elites and redefining the rights and obligations of members" (Meyer 1977).[10] In a more targeted fashion, the educational system can be a powerful instrument for the diffusion and transmission of democratic values and practices, as well as for the eradication of antidemocratic ones.

After World War II, the Allied Powers considered the reform of educational systems in the defeated Axis Powers as a step of paramount importance in the process of democratization of those countries. To this end, in both Germany and Japan the Allies promoted reforms and policies such as the correction of the two-track system in secondary education (considered unequal and absolving from civic responsibilities all those pupils attending technical schools), wider training of teachers (via special schools and exchange programs), and

the production of new civic textbooks, thereby dismantling the authoritarian heritage in the school curricula (Oppenheim 1977; Mitchell and Salsbury 1996). In more recent years, topics such as multiculturalism, integration of minorities and antiracism have been high on the agenda for the reform of educational curricula in many democratic countries, and have been at the center of scholarly discussion as well (e.g., Figueroa 1991; Gill, Mayor, and Blair 1992; Fullwinder 1996; Macedo 2000).

Beyond school curricula and the realm of intervening in the knowledge and values that are transmitted to the new generations, there is another important area in which, more broadly conceived, educational and training policies have tried to promote democratic values and practices, mainly in newly democratized states. In recent years, international programs for "democracy promotion and protection" or "democracy aid" have expanded enormously under the aegis of international organizations, NGOs, and various established democracies, in particular the United States. Such programs encompass "all those overt and voluntary activities adopted, supported and (directly or indirectly) implemented by (public or private) foreign actors explicitly designed to contribute to consolidation of democracy in specific recipient countries" (Schmitter and Brouwer 1999, 13).[11] Similar programs can have the goal of fostering a democratic opening in a nondemocratic country.[12]

A detailed analysis of such programs and projects (of which there are thousands, implemented in perhaps a hundred countries around the globe) is impossible in this context. It is enough to mention that aid programs can be directed at several political institutions and processes: elections, political parties, constitutions, judiciaries, police, legislatures, local governments, militaries, nongovernmental civic advocacy groups, civic education organizations, trade unions, or media organizations. The general prevailing aim of these programs is to support democracy in the long run, either by increasing the knowledge of individual citizens about democratic institutions, educating them to claim their rights and to perform their duties as citizens, trying to support civic groups and other forms of associational life, or intervening directly in the realm of political activity, to reinforce the organizations, procedures, and institutions that make democracy work. In the latter realm, overview of campaign and electoral processes is probably the most basic form of this kind of intervention, while support to party organization and programs for training of judges, parliamentarians, and bureaucrats are gradually acquiring

Table 3.3 Summary of Democracy Aid Activities

Sector	Sector Goal	Type of Aid
Electoral process	Free and fair elections	Electoral aid
	Strong national political parties	Political party building
State institutions	Democratic constitution	Constitutional assistance
	Independent, effective judiciary; well-functioning bureaucracy	Rule-of-law aid
	Competent, representative legislature	Legislative strengthening
	Responsive local government	Local government development
	Prodemocratic military	Civil-military relations
Civil society	Active advocacy NGOs	NGO building
	Politically informed citizenry	Civic education
	Strong independent media	Media strengthening
	Strong independent unions	Union building

Source: Adapted from Carothers (1999, 89).

an increased importance (Carothers 1999). Table 3.3 summarizes the main target sectors of democracy aid and their goals.

The concrete form that aid programs can take varies enormously: from economic support for building an organization, to technical assistance for a bureaucratic structure, to training courses or exchange programs for personnel. The results of such programs on democratic stability and consolidation, if any do emerge, obviously cannot be expected in the short run, as shown indirectly by the occasional frustration of any donor organizations that for various reasons need rapid tangible results for the money they spend, even though they may recognize at the same time that "democratic change in most transitional countries is best measured in decades" (Carothers 1999, 343).[13]

Defending Democracy against a "Clear and Present Danger": Short-term Reactions to Extremism

After this rapid *excursus* on the long-term strategies of defense of democracy, let us now turn to the short-term defensive strategies, which constitute one of the main focuses of this book. While comparativists have started paying some attention to the long-term strategies analyzed above, very little effort has

been devoted to the conceptualization and comparative analysis of those strategies that react to immediate threats posed to a democratic system by internal political actors: the political reaction to "clear and present dangers" to a democracy has remained almost the exclusive province of constitutional lawyers.[14] It is certainly the case that many of these measures are embodied in formal legislation or administrative provisions. Yet, a merely formalistic-juridical view of this phenomenon misses two important aspects: first, that repressive legislative measures are dependent, both for their adoption and their implementation, on certain political conditions, most of all a sufficiently large political consensus; second, that short-term reactions to extremist threats to democracy do not only consist of (legal) repression but also encompass accommodative strategies, which are mainly nonlegal. In the rest of this chapter I analyze short-term repressive and accommodative measures. Again, the examples given below do not exhaust the whole conceivable roster of strategies that can fall under the labels of "militancy" and "incorporation" as constructed in table 3.1; rather, they concentrate on those concrete strategies that were available and used in interwar Europe.

The Repressive Strategies: When a Democracy Turns "Militant"

In a two-part article published in 1937, Karl Loewenstein coined the term "militant democracy" to define a politico-constitutional development typical of many European democracies after the victories of Fascism and Nazism in several countries (Loewenstein 1937a and b). Although, according to his definition, militant democracy includes both a political and a legislative dimension, he focuses much more on the latter: special "antiextremist legislation" (AEL) as an essential means of reaction to immediate extremist threats.

Insufficiently studied, the legislation that democratic regimes can use as a weapon to react against antisystem challenges is broad and diverse, and therefore evades simple classification. Anti-extremist legislation varies along several dimensions, including its *strictness*—how clearly are "enemies" defined, what affects the degree of discretion available to those who implement the legislation; the *breadth of the object* that it covers—does the legislation speak of "democracy" in general terms, or a specific kind of democracy, like for example "the republican form of government" or the like; the *kind of sanction* for violating the law—penal, administrative, merely political; whether the piece of legislation *targets individuals or groups*—individual restrictions of civil and/or

political rights for political reasons, or provisions such as the party ban; and the *formal rank* of the rules—constitutional, statutory, or administrative.[15]

All these, and probably other, criteria could be used to construct a classification of anti-extremist legislation; the criterion that I use here is the legislation's prospective *aim*. Focusing on repression of political parties or groups in particular, I draw the main line of distinction between legislation focusing on what the party or group *is*—its ideological character and the communication of ideological messages to the electorate via political propaganda—and what it *does*—the unconventional, illegal, or violent nature of its political strategies and the behavior of its affiliates. Therefore, the main division within this body of legislation is that between rules that affect the character of an extremist party or group and its propaganda expression and those that curb extremist forms of behavior. Two further classes of repressive norms complete the classification: those covering the outlawing—or suspension for some definite time—of parties and political associations, and those seeking to ensure the material capability of the state to react against extremists via the regulation of the state of emergency. Rules on party or association ban are in a separate category since they embody the harshest measure of militant democracy and, if implemented, its effects are potentially stronger than those of any other defensive mechanism. Norms on the state of emergency and exceptional powers are typical of virtually all constitutional orders, but they can take different shapes with different levels of harshness. The resulting classification is outlined in table 3.4.

Let us look at the different areas one at a time. The first cluster of anti-extremist legislation covers special laws conferring on the executive (the cabinet or the head of state) extraordinary powers to use in the face of an emergency situation. It must be noted that virtually all states have such norms, in one form or another. Even though the declaration of a state of emergency and its actual management by state authorities can hardly be completely subject to legal constraints, the articulation of the legal provisions regulating the possibility for the government to declare a state of emergency and the checks and balances on the executive during the emergency itself vary across countries, which means that their deterrent effects on the political strategies available to the extremists will vary accordingly. In general, the rules on emergency situations and the norms dictating the conditions to declare a state of siege give the executive the legal possibility to react against "military" and other violent

Table 3.4 Clusters of Anti-extremist Legislation

Object of Legislation	Specific Pieces of Special Legislation	Main Goal
State of siege, emergency	Statutory and constitutional regulations for state of emergency Legislation on high treason and seditious activities	Ensure the material capability of the state to react to challenges
Party ban	Legislation on suppression or suspension of political parties Legislation on suppression or suspension of political associations	Eliminate "enemy" parties and groups from the political scene
Antipropaganda	Legislation protecting democratic institutions Legislation for the protection of personal honor Legislation against glorification of political crime Legislation against false news Legislative restrictions on freedom of the press (newspapers, periodicals, pamphlets, books) Legislation against infiltration by foreign propaganda	Curb the possibility of launching delegitimizing messages to the electorate
Anti-extremist forms of behavior	Legislation against party uniforms (symbols etc.) Legislation against party militias Legislation against military training of members of private associations Legislation against carrying arms Legislation restricting freedom of assembly Legislation on public demonstrations	Preserve public order

attacks to the system. The norms defining and sanctioning treasonable acts give the government the possibility of preventing and/or repressing disloyal behavior by state officials, even high-ranking ones. This removes the possibility that extremists can depend on strategies of institutional infiltration and complicity.

The norms providing for a ban on parties and other political associations set limits on political pluralism, enabling the government to ban or temporarily suspend parties or associations that are considered threatening to some

fundamental feature of the system. This is, in principle, the most "visible" governmental weapon used to defend the system from extremist challenges, and judicial control—in more recent times, usually constitutional judicial control—is in most cases prescribed (e.g., Auerbach 1956; Dyson 1975; Gordon 1987). Declaring an extremist association illegal might deprive the extremist movement of organizational resources and social visibility, and disbanding an extremist party removes the possibility for extremists to influence the interplay of parties in parliament, possibly reducing the centrifugal effects on coalition-making described in chapter 1. However, party and association bans carry the risk of some significant negative effects. First, these measures, more than any other component of AEL, might encounter strong principled opposition in public opinion since they contradict democratic principles too starkly; second, they might force the extremists to go underground and adopt other, possibly violent, tactics, which pose a different kind of problem to the incumbents.

The third cluster of AEL groups together those pieces of legislation that limit the possibility of political propaganda on certain issues. Basically, this kind of legislation tries to reduce the ability of extremists to delegitimize the democratic system in the eyes of the electorate. A first example is that of legislation explicitly prohibiting the discrediting of democratic institutions and constitutional bodies. Usually it is the holders of high state offices who are afforded protection from extremist propaganda; in some cases, leaders and politicians of democratic parties not holding any public office or even the parties as such, as was done in Czechoslovakia (Capoccia 2002b), are also protected. To this aim, laws widening the scope of the protection from cases of libel for political reasons can be passed. During the interwar years, it was in fact a typical strategy of extremist parties to define democratic institutions and institutional and political figures as "corrupt" or "weak" or "treasonous," in order to gain votes among dissatisfied electors. Another target of the same type of legislation is the spreading of false news by extremist actors, harming the reputation of the democratic system by misrepresenting facts, skillfully distorted (although not necessarily seditious or libelous): several countries tackled this problem with ad hoc legislation. More specifically aimed at protecting the judiciary from contempt and delegitimization is legislation against the glorification of political crime, another political propaganda activity used by several extremist groups, since it elevated party members who had violated criminal law to the rank of heroes. Other important antipropaganda provisions in those years include a general tightening of censorship on the press and

other means of public expression, as well as limitations on foreign political propaganda to prevent symbolic support to extremists by powerful nondemocratic states.[16]

The fourth cluster of AEL includes norms directed at the maintenance of public order, with the specific aims of maintaining public peace and ensuring the "correct" development of the democratic dialectic. Unlike legislation intended to react to a state of emergency, defending the state from direct "military" attacks by internal enemies, this type of anti-extremist legislation has a more indirect character. In general, its main intended effect is to restrict the choice of strategies available to extremist actors, preventing them from using violent and unconventional behavior to delegitimize the democratic procedures of conflict-solving and, therefore, from gaining support for their alternative proposals. This category includes legislation against the militarization of political parties—more specifically against the use of uniforms, militaristic iconography, and weapons and the formation of militias. The goal of these measures is to curb those forms of behavior that seek to undermine the state's monopoly of force, whether from a symbolic point of view or more concretely in the practice of politics, targeting in particular the use of organized violence for political ends. This kind of legislation was very important during the interwar period, when it was enacted in many European democracies to counteract the tendency to militarization especially—but not only—on the part of Fascist and Nazi parties. Probably the most important rules in this category are those introducing limits to the freedom of assembly, including street demonstrations, another important activity for many antidemocratic actors in those years.

From a political perspective, anti-extremist legislation is highly controversial, since it affects the scope and depth of those very democratic rights and freedoms that constitute the most characteristic trait of a democratic regime as opposed to nondemocratic forms of political rule. Some forms of AEL might affect the rights of potentially large categories of citizens and therefore encounter strong opposition from those directly affected by it. Moreover, the opportunity to curb the political or civil rights of certain groups is bound to be controversial in any democracy as a matter of principle, and to cause negative reactions in national and possibly international public opinion. This is all the more likely when one or more antisystem actors are in a position to influence public opinion substantially. This has led some to maintain that, even though this kind of legislation exists in some systems, it is likely to remain a paper

measure only and not be fully implemented (e.g., Levitt 1993). Does this mean that AEL is a mere formal and rhetorical exercise, at most "expressing anxiety for the moment" (Kirchheimer 1961), interesting for constitutional lawyers (or, in our case, constitutional historians), but with no appreciable political impact? The answer to this question is no, for several reasons. First of all, the passing of anti-extremist legislation is itself an important tool in the overall economy of defense of democracy: the mere existence of legislation alone may very well act as a deterrent to extremist actors, thereby restricting the range of strategies available to them for political proselytism, while increasing those available to the government for repressive action. In other words, the very presence of anti-extremist legislation "shifts the boundary of legality" in favor of the government and against the extremists, which often has a deterrent effect in its own right.

Moreover, the historical analysis developed in the next three chapters shows that despite the hindrances mentioned above, anti-extremist legislation in many cases was implemented against extremists, although to different extents in the various countries, and that in several cases in which the norms were not implemented, implementation was a real possibility. In general, in the 1920s and the 1930s anti-extremist legislation was not passed with a preventive intention but rather as a conscious *reaction* against a systemic challenge—that is, after the challengers had already started to emerge as relevant actors in the political landscape of the country. This means that the occasion for implementation was simultaneous to the passing of that very legislation, and in many cases the same political alliance backing the legislation in parliament supported implementation too.[17]

Actually, not only was nonimplementation relatively infrequent, but there are examples of what can be considered the opposite phenomenon to nonimplementation: "ex post legalization" of repressive actions taken against the extremists without even the pretense of a sound legal basis. As will emerge in the analysis of the specific countries in the following chapters, in some extreme circumstances formal provisions have come after concrete action against the extremists had already been taken—examples of this can be found in both interwar Czechoslovakia and Finland. To be sure, the administrative and court decisions that outlawed extremist parties in both countries did have some legal basis, but this was very tenuous, to say the least. Such decisions came only a few days—in Finland a few hours—before the parliaments approved strong and extensive anti-extremist legislation, which would have provided a much more

solid legal basis. In Czechoslovakia, two extremist Sudeten German parties were dissolved in 1933 just before the final passing of ad hoc party ban legislation, with the Court basing their decisions on an 1867 law dating from the Habsburg period that was still formally in force. In Finland, the government took strong administrative measures in 1930 against the Communist Party, which resulted in its de facto disappearance from the national political scene, the day before special legislation was approved. In these cases the special laws were finally passed with the explicit intention of "legalizing ex post" the repressive decisions—that is, their implementation.

The above summarizes the whole set of measures that can be taken to react to those extremist actors who, because of their actual or expected electoral strength, threaten the viability and the very persistence of the democratic system. In principle, such an objective can be pursued by means of a different category of legislation, that is, electoral reform. One possibility is to depart from strict proportional representation (PR), for example, by increasing the electoral thresholds (legal or effective) required to obtain representation in an otherwise proportional system (e.g., Lijphart and Gibberd 1977; Lijphart 1994). However, whether such a strategy has any detrimental effects for the representation of extremists depends on the conditions of the party systems. In some conditions, it might actually favor extremists. If an extremist party passes the "break-even point" of the electoral system, the system will actually overrepresent it, thereby increasing the danger for the democratic regime (Taagepera and Shugart 1989).[18]

PR systems are never fully proportional, and they can have partially distorting effects and biases, although normally to a lesser extent than majoritarian systems (Rae 1967; Sartori 1986). All countries analyzed in this book elected their parliaments with systems using proportional representation with no legal threshold of exclusion and very limited distorting effects, so the slight underrepresentation that affected the SdP in Czechoslovakia, Rex in Belgium and the IKL in Finland cannot be considered anything other than a product of chance.[19]

Electoral legislation, though, does not only consist of the electoral formula or the determination of a legal threshold of exclusion or rules governing the mathematical transformation of votes into seats in general. The electoral process is affected by many other norms that regulate the whole series of acts surrounding the vote counting, what Douglas Rae called "election laws," as opposed to the more important "electoral laws" (Rae 1967). Although they

have a weaker impact on the allocation of parliamentary seats to parties, election laws can be relevant in the context of defending the system from extremists. Given the variety and detail of these rules, it is difficult to give an exhaustive typology of the rules and how these might be manipulated to disfavor extremist contenders. But their multiplicity and flexibility renders these rules quite amenable to anti-extremist manipulations. Just to give some examples that are discussed in more detail in the next chapters, the government can decide to alter the scheduled date of elections, if they feel that this might disfavor the extremist party, as happened in Belgium; or they might decide that parties that have a certain word in their name cannot be admitted to the competition, thus forcing the party to change its name on the eve of elections, with the imaginable potential negative repercussions on its campaign, as happened—without much success—in Czechoslovakia. Individuals that have belonged to certain organizations can be made ineligible to parliament and even unable to present a candidacy, as happened in Finland to the Communists. The parliament can pass a law deciding that by-elections should not be held every time there is a vacancy in parliament, but should be restricted to specific circumstances, as happened in Belgium to counter Degrelle's tactic of "frivolous by-elections." These are only some examples: other are possible, which points to the fact that manipulation of "election laws" might in some cases be a very important weapon in the hands of a majority to disfavor an extremist contender, and can be tailored quite precisely on the target, unlike the "electoral laws," which in other respects are more important.

The Accommodative Strategies: The Politics of (Partial) Incorporation

While repression is most frequently an important component of the short-term reactions of democratic rulers against extremist political forces, it is not the only short-term strategy they can use. Other strategies can also be adopted, with the intent of partially accepting into the regime parts of the extremist group or party. These are the "incorporation" strategies of table 3.1.

Incorporation strategies consist of explicit attempts by the democratic establishment to include sectors of the extremist groups. More specifically, the government, the parliamentary coalition, the head of state, or other incumbents, can develop accommodative strategies towards the extremist voters or the rank and file or sectors of the extremist elite. The general goal of these strategies is to weaken the extremist groups by incorporating some parts of them. To this end, the executive can agree on policy concessions, embark on an

Table 3.5 Overview of Incorporation Strategies

Defensive Strategy	Particular Threat Addressed	Goal
Appeals to the public	Electoral and recruitment appeal of extremists	Persuade extremist rank and file and potential supporters to support prosystem actors.
Policy concessions	Electoral and recruitment appeal of extremists	Persuade extremist rank and file and potential supporters to support prosystem actors.
Negotiations with extremists	Internal cohesion of extremist elite	Persuade extremist elites to support the system; Gain time for the enactment of other strategies
Creation of ad hoc organizations	Recruitment capacity of extremist groups	Dry out source of recruitment; Reduce potential supporters for extremist actor

intensive program of targeted appeals to the public, negotiate with the extremists themselves, or create an alternative organization in competition with the extremist group (see table 3.5). All these strategies figure prominently in the experience of some interwar European democracies.

Under the label of *appeals to the public* I include public speeches, meetings, conferences and so on, in which some important political figure explicitly attempts to alert the electorate to the danger of a specific extremist threat and to reinforce the legitimacy of the system. To avoid excessively diluting the concept, only appeals that have been explicitly conceived by their authors as part of a strategy of reaction to the extremist challenge should be included in this category. Such appeals against antisystem actors normally come at certain key moments, and often involve institutional, nonpartisan figures. The classic example is that of the head of state addressing the nation in an official speech, warning it against the danger represented by extremists, but other figures—the prime minister or other influential figures—can launch such appeals as well. Although appeals sometimes happen on the eve of elections, this is not always the case: they are normally something apart from normal party campaigning, both because of their timing and also because of the importance or institutional clout of the figures involved.

Narrow definitional criteria should also be used for the definition of *policy*

concessions. The label refers to the inauguration of new policy lines or the substantial alteration of existing ones undertaken by the government to meet some particular demand of the extremist actors. Again, these policy developments here include only those explicitly conceived by the executive as a reaction against extremists. These may be negotiated between the government and other actors, and they tend to turn the extremists' demands into acceptable ones, within the boundaries of the system. This definitional criterion is not to be applied too rigidly; it should be kept in mind that it is often difficult to identify the main causes of policy choices, therefore making it difficult to attribute these unequivocally to a specific government effort to respond to an antisystem challenge. For example, a democratic government might implement a more progressive tax policy to soothe the protests of the lower economic strata of the population who might vote for an orthodox Communist Party, thereby attracting votes away from that party while remaining within the boundaries of democracy. Similarly, a central government might introduce greater administrative autonomy to undermine a secessionist challenge. Now, these measures can be based on different concerns, including "positive" ones, such as reforming the taxation or administrative system for functional reasons, or because reform is a part of the platform of one or more of the governing parties, independently of their will to react to extremist challenges. Moreover, evidence on negotiations with extremists on these matters is often difficult to find, as they are often kept secret. When direct evidence on concessions to extremists is lacking, a good rule of thumb is to recast as such only those policies that did not appear in the agenda of the governmental forces before the extremists started to be a relevant threat to the political system.

As reported in table 3.5, the main direct goal of both appeals to the public and policy concessions is to persuade the potential or actual rank and file (broadly conceived as the supporters as well as the electorate) of the antisystem party or parties to give their support to prosystem actors—in particular to the main parties away from which the extremists are attracting support. Policy concessions constitute the other side of the coin of what in chapter 2 has been called, following Sartori, the "political outbidding" tactics of an antisystem party, which pertain to its relational anti-systemness: proposing more and more extreme policy solutions to outstanding issues, and rejecting as inadequate or insufficient whatever the government proposes. This means that a government majority will normally resort to policy concessions if it has already enacted other defensive measures, since a defensive strategy based on

them alone could hardly work against an antisystem party which will always promise more to its electors.

Although in some respects overlapping with policy concessions, a distinct strategy of incorporation is that of *negotiating with extremists,* which is directed at the elite of the extremist groups. In general, the direct purpose of this strategy is to integrate into the democratic decision-making process at least the more moderate sectors of the extremists, often by making concessions in terms of spoils and office, rather than of policy, in exchange for ideological moderation. Successful negotiations bring back into the system those parts of the extremist elite whose goals are compatible with, or can be accommodated within, the democratic system of rule, thus enlarging its support. This strategy is based on the assumption that the moderate parts of the elite who accept the compromise with the system bring at least part of their following with them, thereby engendering a split within the extremist camp and weakening it. In some cases, negotiating with the extremists can also have a different, more purely "tactical" goal—that of gaining time while other defensive strategies are being enacted.

Finally, an incorporation strategy directed towards both the extremist elites and the rank and file is that of *creating ad hoc alternative organizations* that are in competition with the existing extremist party or group and can even replace it once it has been disbanded or outlawed. (A milder form of this strategy is to support the activities of existing alternative groups.) The ideological profile of the new organization would be close to that of the extremist one, taking on some of its values and principles, but leaving out the outright extremist messages and goals. The new organization would thus be less directly opposed to the legitimacy of the existing system, and would obviously be directly or indirectly controlled by the incumbents, in one form or another. The purpose of this strategy is to reduce the appeal of an existing extremist organization, trying to dry up some of the sources of its support by attracting parts of its rank and file and elites, normally second-rank leaders of the extremist organization. In the case of an organization that has already been disbanded, the more specific goal of creating an alternative one is to preempt the formation of a new organization of the same profile that "picks up the pieces" of the old one. (Alternatively, some states, such as Czechoslovakia during the interwar period or West Germany after the war, have passed "post-prohibition" measures, which pursue the same objective *via* repression.)

To sum up at this point, defense of democracy is at once most important and most difficult when democracy's internal enemies are strong. First, it requires short-term strategies of defense that are politically difficult and normatively controversial. Second, these strategies, in particular repression but also accommodation, have as a necessary condition the cooperation of incumbent democratic elites, in particular the governing majority. However, as the concept of relational anti-systemness shows, the presence of strong antisystem parties engenders a particular dynamic in party interplay that makes exactly this kind of cooperation difficult and makes democratic leaders, especially those most exposed to the electoral challenge of extremists, face arduous decisions. This was the situation that confronted the democratic elites in Belgium, Czechoslovakia, and Finland during the interwar years, in a situation of generalized crisis in which small, contingent decisions had the capacity of driving the system towards a path of democratic breakdown or survival. It is to the analysis of the political process during the political crises in these countries that I now turn.

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CHAPTER FOUR

Czechoslovakia

> Although the German fascist movement was quite strong in Czechoslovakia in 1938, the anti-fascist forces were still strong enough to protect the republic and democracy. . . . Not internal factors, not even the strength of local fascist parties, led to destruction of Czechoslovakia. External forces did. German aggression, which used the German minority in Czechoslovakia as a tool, and the policy of the Western democracies, especially that of Great Britain, led to the tragedy of Czechoslovakia at Munich and the subsequent years.
>
> —JAN HAVRÀNEK, ''FASCISM IN CZECHOSLOVAKIA''

Although several ideologically antisystem parties were active in the new democratic Czechoslovakia that rose from the ashes of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, the main danger to the existence of the republic came from the polarization between the Czechoslovak majority and the large German-speaking Sudeten minority, especially after 1933, when a strong extreme right-wing party opposing the existence of a unitary Czechoslovak state while at the same time abiding by antidemocratic values, the Sudeten German Homeland Front (*Sudetendeutsche Heimatsfront,* SHF), emerged and, after the 1935 elections, became the country's largest political party. The actual and expected size of the party and the strong support that it received from the Nazi Reich triggered defectionist tendencies in some democratic parties, in particular both the Sudeten German and the Czechoslovak Agrarian parties—the latter was traditionally the largest party in the country—even before the SHF achieved parliamentary representation under the name of the Sudeten German Party (*Sudetendeutsche Partei,* SdP). The SHF/SdP, given its ethnic nature, only competed in the German-speaking regions of Czechoslovakia, and did not therefore constitute a direct electoral threat for the Czechoslovak Agrarians—

which it certainly was for the Sudeten German Agrarians. However, several right-wing Agrarian politicians saw in its rise an opportunity to shift the political equilibrium of the government to the right. The political project of the internal right wing of the Czechoslovak Agrarians, which also involved the internal right wing of the Sudeten German Agrarians, was defeated thanks to the determinate action of the head of state, first Thomas Masaryk and after 1935 his successor, pupil, and collaborator Edvard Beneš. Both presidents were in favor of close cooperation between the Socialist and the Agrarian forces (both Czechoslovak and Sudeten German) in government and of a democratic Czechoslovakia. To this end they cooperated closely with the internal majority of both Agrarian parties, which managed to contain the defectionist minorities within those parties.

The Czechoslovak democratic forces managed to keep the majority together, and although banning the SHF/SdP proved impossible, they enacted an elaborate set of both repressive and inclusive strategies of systemic defense after 1935, which had a substantial impact in limiting the party's scope of action. The aggressive foreign policy of the German Nazi government, soon claiming to be the "protector" of the German-speaking minorities outside its boundaries, progressively turned the ethnic problem of Czechoslovakia from a domestic into an international one, leading ultimately to the territorial dismemberment and the end of the independence of the republic. Before this turn of events, however, although operating in largely unfavorable conditions, the Czechoslovak political elites managed to react effectively to antisystem challenges and preserve the democratic system, which was also challenged by substantial Communist, Fascist, and Slovak nationalist fringes.

As the analysis below shows, it is difficult to believe that Czechoslovak democracy could have survived in the absence of such strategies until September 1938, when the Munich Conference took out of the Czechoslovak leaders' hands the political destiny of their country. By the same token, the analysis of the political dynamics of the years 1933–38 lends support to the counterfactual argument that, had it not been for Hitler's disruption of the European system of international security, the Czechoslovak elites would probably have managed to keep the internal situation of their country under control without abandoning democratic rule altogether, unlike the obvious examples of failure during the previous years in Central and Eastern European countries, where democracy had proved unviable and had been "killed from above." The positive outcome in Czechoslovakia was mainly due to the effective counteraction

of the centrifugal forces triggered by the rise of the SHF and the strategies of defense enacted afterwards. This chapter analyzes the rise of the SHF, the projects of political reaggregation that it triggered among the established parties, and the politico-institutional strategies of defense enacted by the Czechoslovak rulers.

The Challenge of the Extreme Right in the Sudetenland

Ethnic Composition and Political Fragmentation in the First Republic

In the First Czechoslovak Republic, more than a third of the population was neither Czech nor Slovak. Between a fifth and a quarter of the population was German-speaking (the *Sudetendeutsche*), and was mainly concentrated in the border regions with Austria and Germany.[1] Several other smaller ethnic groups (Ruthenians, Magyars, Poles, Jews) also existed within Czechoslovakia. Although official data do not report separate figures for the Slovaks, considered officially as "part of the Czechoslovak nation" together with the Czechs, around three million people lived in the province of Slovakia in 1921, most of whom were ethnically Slovaks. Table 4.1 reports census data from the official yearbook of the State Statistical Office.[2]

Ethnic and ideological differences resulted in extreme fragmentation and polarization in the Czechoslovak party system.[3] Five Czech-based parties (the "Petka") were the motors of the construction of the state and the constitution-making process. The conservative and nationalist National Democratic Party (*Československá národní demokracie*, ČND) was the main heir to the nineteenth-century "Young Czech" movement; its leader, Karel Kramář, was one of the main figures of the independence movement, which made him prime minister in the first Czechoslovak government after the creation of the new state. The party moved to the right during the interwar years, finally allying with outright fascist elements in 1935.[4] The People's Party (*Československá strana lidová*, ČSL), which suffered the departure of its Slovak wing in 1921, was a party of traditional Catholic values, which distinguished it from the Hussite orientation of the majority of the Czech elites. Both Socialist parties of Czechoslovakia had a moderate orientation: the Social Democratic Party (*Československá sociálně demokratická strana dělnická,* ČSDSD), after the Communist split of 1920, enhanced its moderate positions, and was usually part of the government majority, the only exception being the years 1926–29. The kind

Table 4.1 Population in Czechoslovakia, by Ethnicity (Native Language)

	Census Year			
	1921		1930	
Native Language	Population	%	Population	%
Czechoslovak	8,760,937	65.51	9,688,770	66.91
Ruthenian	461,849	3.45	549,169	3.79
German	3,123,568	23.36	3,231,688	22.32
Magyar	745,431	5.57	691,923	4.78
Polish	75,853	0.57	81,737	0.57
Hebrew-Yiddish	180,855	1.35	186,642	1.29
Other	25,871	0.19	49,636	0.34
Total (citizens)	13,374,364	100.00	14,479,565	100.00
Resident foreigners	238,808		249,971	
Total population	13,613,172		14,729,536	

Source: Data from the State Statistical Office, reported in Rothschild (1974, 89).

of socialism advocated by the National Socialist Party (*Československá národně socialistická strana,* ČNSS) was patriotic and evolutionary, as opposed to the Marxist-internationalist orientation of the mainstream. In reality the ČNSS included a wide spectrum of ideological orientations; in 1923 an anarchist wing seceded, and in 1926 bitter internal strife led to the exit of the group led by Jiří Stříbrný, which moved towards fascist positions (Kelly 1995). The most important Czechoslovak party for the whole interwar period was the Republican Party of Agrarians and Peasants (*Republikánská strana zemêdêlského a malorolnického lidu*—hereafter "the Agrarians"). The party was the largest in Czechoslovakia for most of the interwar years, as evidenced by its presence in all government coalitions and its ability to appoint the prime minister consistently after 1922, with the exception of a short interlude in 1926, when a nonparty cabinet took office. The party was mainly the representative of middle-class interests, quickly enlarging its patronage from the countryside to the urban areas thanks to its tight control of large sectors of the bureaucracy as well as of the cooperative and banking systems (e.g., Rothschild 1974, 95ff.).[5]

The number of Czechoslovak parties included also the Communist, Fascist and Slovak nationalists. The Communist Party of Czechoslovakia (*Kommunistická Strana Československá,* KSČ) emerged in 1921 after a split within the Czechoslovak Social Democrats and constituted an especially serious threat to the republic shortly after World War I, when revolts established ephemeral

Table 4.2 Seats in the Czechoslovak Lower Chamber, 1920–1935

		Seats in 1920		Seats in 1925		Seats in 1929		Seats in 1935	
Party Acronym	English Name	*N*	(%)	*N*	(%)	*N*	(%)	*N*	(%)
RSZML	Republican Party of Agrarians and Peasants (Czech Agrarians)	28[a]	10	45	15	46	15.3	45	15
NRSR	Slovak Agrarians	12	4.3	—	—	—	—	—	—
ČŽOSS	Czechoslovakian Trade and Industry Middle-Class Party	6	2.1	13	4.3	12	4	17	5.7
ČND	Czechoslovak National Democracy	19	6.8	13	4.3	15	5	17	5.7
ČNSS	Czechoslovak National Socialist Party	24[b]	8.5	28	9.3	32	10.7	28	9.3
ČSDSD	Czechoslovak Social Democratic Party of the Workers	74[c]	26.3	29	9.7	39	13	38	12.7
ČSL	Czech(oslovak) People's Party	33[d]	11.7	31	10.3	25	8.3	22	7.3
HSL'S	Slovak People's Party	—	—	23	7.7	19	6.3	22	7.3
KSČ	Communist Party of Czechoslovakia	—	—	41	13.7	30	10	30	10
NOF	National Fascist Community (Czech Fascists)	—	—	—	—	3	1	6	2
BdL	Farmers' Federation (German Agrarians)	11	3.9	24	8	12	4	5	1.7
DCVP	German Christian Social Party	10	3.6	13	4.3	14	4.7	6	2
DSAP	German Social Democratic Party	31[e]	11	17	5.7	21	7	11	3.7
DNP	German National Party (German Nationalists)	10	3.6	10	3.3	7	2.3	—	—
DNSAP	German National Socialists (German Nazis)	5	1.8	7	2.3	8	2.7	—	—
SdP	Sudeten German Party	—	—	—	—	—	—	44	14.7
	Smaller German parties	5	1.8	—	—	4	1.3	—	—
	Hungarian parties	10	3.6	4	1.3	9	3	9	3
	Polish parties	—	—	1	0.3	4	1.3	—	—
	Other parties	3	1.1	1	0.3	—	—	—	—
	Total	281	100.1	300	99.8	300	99.9	300	100.1

Sources: Schultze (1969); Wende (1981); Slama and Kaplan (1986). Total percentages do not equal 100% due to rounding error.

[a] In the 1920 elections, the Czech Agrarians had an electoral pact with the Slovak Agrarians. The two parties first formed a single parliamentary group, then merged in 1922.

[b] Decreased to 20 seats (7.1%) after the split of the Vrbenský group in 1923.

[c] Decreased to 52 seats (18.5%) after 22 MPs seceded to form the Communist Party in 1921.

[d] Decreased to 21 seats (7.5%) after 12 MPs of the internal Slovak wing split off in 1921 to form the HSL'S.

[e] In 1920 the 4 MPs of the German-Hungarian Social Democrats joined the party, making the total 35 seats (12.5%).

Communist regimes in several central European states (e.g., Zinner 1963; Kuhn 1965).[6] Various extreme right-wing groups, generally inspired by Italian Fascism and often linked to specific leaders, were active in the republic. The most important of these was the National Fascist Community (*Narodní obec fašistická,* NOF), which only had a handful of MPs in Parliament after 1929 and never constituted a relevant political force during the 1920s. The Czech extreme right achieved more relevance with the turn of National Democracy (ČND) towards extreme right positions in 1934, when quasi-Fascist elements took over its leadership (Lemberg 1969, 128–31). However, the electoral alliance between ČND and two extreme nationalist Czech groups (called "National Union") in the 1935 elections was a failure. Lastly, the Slovak People's Party (*Hlinkova Slovenská L'udová Strana,* HSL'S) emerged in 1921 from the split of the Slovak wing of the Czechoslovak People's Party, representing Slovaks resentment of the prevailing Czech political and cultural hegemony. Although the party first adopted radical positions around the mid-1930s, it had always been a source of trouble for the Czech-centered parties (Felak 1994). Attempts to integrate it politically failed, and the government sometimes had to react to the radical opinions expressed by some of its representatives.[7]

In the four general elections held between 1920 and 1935, non-Czechoslovak parties obtained between 25% and 30% of the total vote. Like the other minorities of Czechoslovakia, the Sudeten Germans were represented by several parties.[8] The strongest was the German Social Democratic Party (*Deutsche Sozialdemokratische Arbeiterpartei in der Tschechoslowakischen Republik,* DSAP), which was also the first to take up a collaborative attitude towards the Czechoslovak state in the early 1920s. After the split of their left wing, which joined the Czechoslovak Communist Party in 1921, the DSAP always had a moderate orientation and was closely tied to the Czechoslovak Social Democrats (Wingfield 1989). The German Agrarians (*Bund der Landwirte,* BdL), a moderate-conservative party whose following was concentrated in the countryside of the Sudeten German regions, also switched early to activism, entering government in 1926 and closely cooperating with the Czechoslovak Agrarians thereafter (N. Linz 1979; Slapnicka 1970, 25). A similar route was followed by the German Christian Social Party (*Deutsche Christlichsoziale Volkspartei,* DCVP), which always had good relations with its Czech counterpart, whose ideological profile it closely resembled (Schütz 1979). The party also entered the national government in 1926, was then excluded in 1929, and reentered in 1936, during

the most critical phase of the relationship between the Czechoslovak government and the SdP.

The Sudeten German parties, which together with all the other ethnic minority parties had been excluded from the constitution-making process, unanimously opposed the newly established Czechoslovak Republic in its early years. Most of the parties soon became more accommodating on this point. By the early 1920s, in fact, the "negativist front" (which "denied" the legitimacy of the new republic) crumbled, and the majority of the Sudeten German political parties declared their readiness to cooperate with the government (e.g., Burian 1969; N. Linz 1979). This shift towards a cooperative attitude (called "activism" in the political jargon of the time) in 1922–23 left only the Sudeten German Nationalist Party (*Deutsche National partei,* DNP) and the Sudeten German National-Socialist Party of Labor (*Deutsche Nationalsozialistische Arbeiterpartei,* DNSAP) holding negativist positions, as mentioned above. Their electoral following, however, was limited, and they never constituted a serious threat to the republic.[9]

The extreme fragmentation and ideological differentiation of the party system posed severe problems for the democratic forces of the First Republic, which adopted a complex strategy to confront the challenges emerging from the political society and ensure the survival of the republic. First of all, since the inception of the republic, the core Czechoslovak parties and the charismatic "founding father" and president, Thomas Masaryk, who served uninterruptedly from 1920 to 1935, tried to integrate the moderate ethnic formations, especially the German activists, into the political process and even into the national government (an analogous strategy failed for the Slovak autonomists). Second, during the peak years of the crisis in 1933–38, the same forces fought to keep a democratic coalition together, succeeding in spite of severe difficulties. Finally, once that was achieved, they did not hesitate to use defensive measures against the irreducibly extremist parties, joining repression with strategies of incorporation intended to win back the consensus of a majority of Sudeten Germans in favor of a unitary and democratic Czechoslovakia.

October 1933–May 1935: The SHF

The Sudeten German extreme right became a more significant danger after Hitler came to power in January 1933. After that moment, the leaders of the DNSAP struggled to deny officially their similarity to or support for the Ger-

man NSDAP, fearing repressive measures. The Czechoslovak government, with the support of the activists parties, decided nonetheless to ban the DNSAP and the DNP. On 1 October 1933, when the outlawing of the DNSAP and the DNP was in the air but had not yet been formalized, Konrad Henlein, president of the German *Turnverband* (Gym Association) officially founded the SHF, probably after discussions with German Nazi leaders (Brügel 1967, 244-45). The new organization soon attracted the members and sympathizers of the outlawed DNP and DNSAP; since it was a new organization with no historical ties or burdens, it could address its programmatic appeal to all Sudeten Germans, which allowed it to recruit new members rapidly. Soon it was larger than the two outlawed parties put together (Slapnicka 1970, 77).

As explained in Chapter 2, the SHF certainly held to antidemocratic ideals and values, but, especially between October 1933 and the elections of May 1935, the leadership of the party adopted a skillful strategy of "political camouflage." In their public interventions—political speeches, interviews, official declarations, and so on—in Czechoslovakia and abroad, the leaders of the party—and Henlein in particular—were very careful not to reveal their real political goals, and generally stated their loyalty to liberal democratic values and institutions, as well as to the Czechoslovak Republic. There is a long documented series of public appearances in which Henlein professed democratic loyalty and, more ambiguously, expressed "reservations" about Fascism and Nazism, and of contemporaneous private political meetings in which he professed his loyalty to Nazism and Nazi Germany. By the same token, the official press organ of the SHF, *Rundschau,* founded at the beginning of 1934, instead of explicit antidemocratic sentiments printed some generic acknowledgments to democracy. At the same time, however, Henlein and his collaborators maintained secret contacts with senior representatives of the German Nazi government. Documents show that already by June 1934, when Henlein met secretly in Bad Elster with Hermann Ullmann, the official representative of the Nazi government responsible for the Sudeten German problems, the SHF was fully ready to act as a fifth column in Czechoslovakia for Hitler's Germany. Not long thereafter came the first documentable secret financial support from the German government to the SHF. The German Reich also generously financed the national electoral campaign of the party in 1935. After those elections, financial support from Nazi Germany became more substantial and regular, providing the party with about a third of the total income of the party coming from internal sources. In order to contribute further to this "benign" political image, various

leaders of the SHF engaged in some superficial arguments in the press with the leaders of the dissolved DNSAP and DNP, who had fled to Germany after their parties were banned (e.g., Brügel 1967, 246–347 passim; Luža 1964, 98-104; Slapnicka 1970, 38). The reasons for this duplicitous behavior are apparent: in 1932–33, the Czechoslovak Parliament had passed several pieces of anti-extremist legislation that certainly limited the party's ability to take action in several fields—such as propaganda, building of militias, and so on—without the risk of being banned, a perspective that the recent outlaw of the DNP and the DNSAP made quite palpable.

May 1935–September 1938: The SdP

The remarkable success of the renamed *Sudetendeutsche Partei* (SdP) in the 1935 parliamentary elections marked the beginning of a change in the public attitude of the party towards the Czechoslovak political system. Henlein slowly showed his real political face, counting on the large following of his party in the Sudeten regions—between 60 and 66 percent of the Sudeten German electorate had voted for his party[10]—and the external support of an increasingly emboldened and powerful Nazi Reich. In the words of the SdP leaders themselves, they adopted a "Salami-Taktik"—that is, revealed their extremist intentions by means of successive, increasingly daring provocations challenging the democratic system of Czechoslovakia "one slice at a time."

Henlein, however, was particularly careful in continuing to foster his "democratic" image in the international arena even after the 1935 elections, thereby gaining credit in important diplomatic and international circles as a moderate defender of the rights of an ethnic minority in a multinational state. In August 1935 Henlein went to London, where he met with Colonel Graham Christie, who had probably been charged by the Intelligence Service to sound out the Sudeten German leader. Christie was a precious contact for Henlein, since he procured him an invitation to the prestigious Chatham House at the Royal Institute for International Affairs, where Henlein held his first conference in July 1936. In general, during this and his successive trips to London, Henlein managed to give the impression of a sincere democrat and of "an honest man genuinely striving toward a settlement of just German claims within the framework of Czechoslovak democracy" (Luža 1964, 87). Henlein managed to portray himself and his party in these terms also to Sir Robert Vansittart, a high-ranking official of the British Foreign Office and an expert in German affairs, with whom he had several meetings between 1936 and 1938. In those

meetings, as well as in several interviews that he gave to English newspapers, Henlein always played the role of a moderate endeavoring to find a sensible compromise to protect the rights of the German minority within the Czechoslovak democratic state. Henlein's last trip to London took place in May 1938, and even at this late date the Sudeten leader repeated, not only to Vansittart but also to leading political figures against the appeasement strategy vis-à-vis Hitler (among them Winston Churchill), that he was only striving for the autonomy of Sudeten German regions within Czechoslovakia and that he had never received any orders from Berlin. Both statements were unquestionably false: starting in 1936, his secret contacts with Berlin were strong indeed. On the same trip, Henlein met the Czechoslovak envoy in London, to whom he said that despite the radical positions that he assumed in the recent SdP convention, he was ready to proceed democratically and to find a compromise within the framework of Czechoslovak democracy (Brügel 1967, 284–88, 424–25).

Difficulties in the internal situation had started to escalate in February 1937, when the Czechoslovak government signed a formal agreement with the activist parties to improve the treatment and rights of the German minority while maintaining the constitutional order. After a party meeting in Aussig in March 1937, the SdP presented in Parliament six bills called "Laws for the Protection of the People" (*Volksschutzgesetze*). The principle at the basis of the bills was the transformation of all the nationalities of Czechoslovakia into corporations (*Körperschaften*) regulated by public law and with public powers and competencies. Membership of these corporations was to be ethnically based, and each corporation would elect its own "speaker" to represent it to the government. According to the bills, the speaker would not be removable by the government, nor would he be responsible to it (Raschhofer 1937; see also Raschhofer 1953). The passing of these bills would have meant the de facto end of the sovereignty of the Czechoslovak Republic over large parts of its territory. The bills were rejected in the preliminary assessment phase by the Parliamentary Committee for Constitutional Affairs. Before presenting the bills to Parliament, Henlein was already aware of Hitler's intention to attack Czechoslovakia, although the plans for this enterprise had not yet been defined in detail. Therefore, leaving aside the issue of whether they could have been implemented in practice, the *Volksschutzgesetze* should be considered as a pure strategy of "outbidding" and destabilization, typical of relational antisystem parties, in response to the concessions obtained by the democratic Sudeten German parties with the February agreement.

After that, the destabilization strategy continued. In October 1937 Henlein decided to provoke a clash with the police during a public meeting of the SdP in Teplitz-Schönau, an episode that was obviously exploited in SdP propaganda. This move was probably coordinated with Berlin, a supposition strongly suggested by the fact that the news of the clash was reported in the German media with great emphasis before the Czechoslovak government was even aware of it. Henlein wrote an "open letter" to President Beneš—again, published in Germany before it even arrived in Prague—in which he concluded that the only way of solving the problem of the relationship between Czechs and Germans was to accept the *Volksschutzgesetze* (Brügel 1967, 327–33). At the beginning of November 1937 Hitler's plans to annex Czechoslovakia were defined in detail, and Henlein gave explicit support to them, requesting in a written memorandum to Hitler (who had probably demanded such a document) the intervention of the German Reich to solve the Sudeten problem. (This did not deter him, a few days later, from giving an interview to the *New York Times* in which he again described himself and his party as loyal and democratic citizens of Czechoslovakia.) In the following months, and in particular after the *Anschluss* of Austria to the Reich in March 1938, the clash between the SdP and the Czechoslovak government was increasingly conditioned by international factors, leading to the dismemberment of the country in the Munich Conference of September 1938.

The Defense

The democratic rulers of Czechoslovakia had to cope with several aggressive antisystem challengers from the very early years of the republic, and they generally did so in an effective manner. The defensive reactions to the Sudeten German extreme right were the most difficult politically—given the defectionist tendencies of sectors of the democratic forces—as well as institutionally—because of the identification of the antisystem challenge with a large majority of the country's largest ethnic minority. In this situation, the SdP could easily paint the defensive reactions of the Czechoslovak democratic forces as attacks against the rights of the German minority. The enactment of strong repressive measures against the SdP was made even more difficult by the international situation. Hitler's systematic disruption of the European system of alliances after 1935 made Czechoslovakia's international position increasingly fragile, especially vis-à-vis the Nazi Reich. This rendered any repressive action against

the main representatives of the Sudeten German minority a very delicate issue. Therefore, the Czechoslovak democratic elites took particular care in differentiating, in their defensive strategy, between the extremist SdP and the "activist" Sudeten German political forces, trying to isolate the former and favor the latter. The rest of the chapter analyzes, first, the reactions of the democratic parties to the rise of the SHF, highlighting the political difficulties created by the ambiguous position of the internal right wing of the Czechoslovak Agrarians and the electoral concerns of the Sudeten German Agrarians; and second, the defensive strategies enacted by the head of state and the government.

The Reaction of the Agrarian Parties
The Agrarians and the SHF

After their victory in local elections, in October 1933 the DNSAP and the DNP were suspended and then dissolved, by governmental decree, with the support of all democratic parties.[11] Much less united was the democratic front vis-à-vis the newly formed SHF. Among the "activist" parties, the BdL had a different reaction from that of the DSAP and the DCVP, which were in general hostile to the SHF from its creation: under the pressure of large sectors of the party, including the *Landjugend,* its youth association, the BdL founded the *Landstand,* an organization that during its short life span supported the creation of a corporate economy and pursued the specific goal of creating an arena for cooperation with the SHF. The head of the *Landjugend,* Gustav Hacker, who was very favorable to cooperation with Henlein, was appointed the leader of the *Landstand.* Several reasons account for the decision of the Agrarian leadership and the party leader and national government minister Franz Spina to adopt this strategy at this particular moment: for example, Spina may have yielded to the pressures of the right-leaning *Landjugend,* some of whose members had had secret contacts with the SHF even before the creation of the *Landstand*. However, it is highly probable that two concerns were paramount in deciding to adopt a nonconfrontational attitude vis-à-vis Henlein. First, an electoral concern: it seemed very likely that the Sudeten German Agrarians would be seriously affected by electoral competition from the SHF, which promised to gather most of its consensus in the rural areas of the Sudeten regions. Thus, creating a forum for cooperation between the two parties was the first step towards convincing the SHF not to compete with the Agrarians in the Sudeten countryside and concentrate its electoral appeal on the urban areas, while the BdL would concentrate on the rural areas. Secondly,

Spina probably thought that by positioning himself and his party as the political protectors of Henlein, he could use the SHF to his own political advantage. At that moment Henlein needed influential friends who could testify to the authenticity of his loyalty to democracy, something he was constantly proclaiming in the press and in public speeches. The SHF, in fact, was under the continuing threat of being dissolved as successor organization of the DNSAP, a possibility that the new party ban law of 1933 (as we shall see) had made concrete. The attitude of the German Agrarians and their ongoing overtures to the SHF caused tensions in the governmental majority, especially with the German Social Democrats, who publicly called on the BdL to "distinguish in its ranks between the democrats and the fascists" (Brügel 1967, 252).

At the same time, centrifugal strains were starting to manifest themselves in the Czechoslovak Agrarian Party too. It should be noted first that the influence of the historical leader of the party Antonín Švehla declined steadily after 1927 due to his bad health, until his death in 1933.[12] Švehla was the most important ally of President Masaryk within the Czechoslovak Agrarians, and his decline left much more leeway to the right-wing factions of the party, which were growing impatient with the moderate and pro-Socialist policies supported by the president and his entourage, known as the "Castle" (*Hrad*), named after the site of the presidency in Prague.[13] After having financed, with little success, the Czech Fascists in the previous years, in 1934–35 these political circles attempted to use the SHF to shift the political equilibrium of the country to the right, excluding from power the two Socialist parties as well as the forces around President Masaryk and the Foreign Minister Beneš. This strategy was backed by a substantial portion of the party, including, for example, the group controlling the party newspaper *Venkov* ("Land"), edited by Josef Vraný. In addition, Rudolf Beran, general secretary of the party after 1929 and party chairman after 1935, maintained a close relationship with the rightist groups, although he was careful not to alienate the moderates (Miller 1999, 181).

Thus, in the autumn of 1934, the BdL was incorporated in the broader plans of the internal right wing of the Czechoslovak Agrarians. There were meetings between Beran and Wolfgang Zierhut, leader of the BdL parliamentary group, in which the question of the political reliability of Henlein was discussed. Zierhut, by virtue of the contacts already existing between his party and the SHF, gave broad reassurances on the point. The scenario discussed in the meetings involved a future alliance between the Czechoslovak Agrarians and the BdL, which in turn would control the "15 or 20 MPs" that the SHF should

be allowed (and was expected) to obtain in the 1935 elections, given an electoral alliance with the German Agrarians. In Beran's view, the BdL would be able to ensure that the SHF cooperated in an "activist-oriented" politics in exchange for their participation in the government majority. In this context, the (Agrarian) minister of the interior would consider bringing the general elections forward to the beginning of 1935. The expected result of an early election would put the new majority in a position to elect the new president in conditions favorable to the right-wing forces.[14] The prospective candidate for the presidency would be Agrarian Prime Minister Jan Malypetr. After his election, in the new political climate, it would be possible to exclude the Socialist forces from the government coalition, or in any case to reduce their influence strongly, to the advantage of the Agrarian forces, which would then be able to impose their preferences in both internal and economic policy.[15] The removal of Beneš from the office of foreign minister was also discussed. For the time being, however, the determined anti-SHF stance of both the Czechoslovak and the Sudeten German Social Democratic forces called for caution. Therefore, it was decided that Henlein should be allowed to give public speeches and interviews in the government-supportive Czech press in which he would confirm his loyalty to the republic.[16]

The arrival of the Czechoslovak Agrarians on the scene, however, had an important effect on the negotiations between the BdL and the SdP: as soon as he knew that he could count on the protection of the much more powerful Czechoslovak Agrarians, Henlein became less interested in coming to an agreement with the BdL and therefore rejected its proposal of a division of areas of influence in the electoral campaign on the basis of similar programmatic platforms. Thus, the negotiations between the two parties stagnated and eventually came to an end, and direct negotiations between the Czechoslovak Agrarians and Henlein began. Such negotiations were carried out on the Agrarian side by Viktor Stoupal, one of the most important leaders of the party in Moravia.[17] Stoupal, whose political preference was for the establishment of a right-wing coalition in Czechoslovakia, tried to negotiate with Henlein from a position of strength, threatening the dissolution of the SHF by governmental decree if Henlein did not agree to an electoral alliance with the BdL. Henlein resisted this request, making no secret of his intention to unleash political chaos in the Sudeten regions if his party were to be dissolved. In the end, the Czechoslovak Agrarians could not get what they wanted from Henlein, and in

March 1935 the government admitted the SHF into the elections, although only after forcing it to change its name to the Sudeten German Party (*Sudetendeutsche Partei,* SdP).

In fact, banning the party, as Beneš and the Socialist parties advocated and for which a solid legal basis had existed since October 1933, proved impossible since it met with strong opposition by the right wing of the Agrarians, who were essential for the stability of the government coalition.[18] To insist too much on the party's dissolution would have been to jeopardize the government in a context that was becoming increasingly difficult, both internally and internationally. Thus, the discussion over whether the SHF should be banned as a follow-up organization of the DNSAP went on for all of 1934, and as late as the end of March 1935, with elections planned for May, it was by no means clear whether that party would have been able to participate. Prime Minister Malypetr took a neutral position and asked for the intervention of Masaryk, who decided against the ban. It seems that, beyond the consideration for the internal equilibrium of the government majority, two further factors influenced his decision: first, a necessary counterpart to banning the SHF would have been generous concessions to the activist Germans, which no Czech party was willing or able to do with elections looming. (It should be noted that this circumstance actually weakened the position of the right-wing Agrarians in their negotiations with Henlein as time passed, since the threat of dissolution of the SHF became increasingly less credible—nor could the elections be postponed, as the termination date of the legislature had been reached.) Secondly, Masaryk thought that the SHF would be "parliamentarized," in other words, that its entry into Parliament would lead it to adopt a moderate position. Then, if the need arose, the party could be dissolved anyway.

The surprise of the 1935 elections was not so much the victory of the SdP in itself but its size: the party turned out to be the strongest in terms of votes; it obtained 15.2 percent of the national vote, amounting to about two-thirds of the German-speaking electorate. This outcome plainly made the option of banning the party no longer viable—at least under normal conditions. At the same time, the political projects of the right-wing Agrarians became more difficult to fulfill since, in the new situation, the SdP could hardly be considered anyone's political instrument. Yet the "defectionist" behavior of important rightist circles within both the Czechoslovak and the Sudeten German Agrarians continued.

The Situation after the Elections of 1935

The main political factor at the basis of the preservation of the democratic coalition in Czechoslovakia after the 1935 elections was the political alliance between the Castle and the Agrarian leader Milan Hodža that had formed three years before, in 1932. Although the reasons for this alliance are to be found in Hodža's difficult financial situation, which induced him to turn to Masaryk for help, rather than in a grand strategic vision, this proved to be the main counterbalancing factor against the defectionist tendencies of the internal right wing of the Agrarians.[19] For his part, Masaryk accepted Hodža's offer of support in exchange for financial help because his main concern was to secure the election of his pupil and closest collaborator, Foreign Minister Edvard Beneš, as his successor to the presidency (Zeman 1997, 97–99). The realization of this political project necessitated the support of strong allies within the Agrarians, which Masaryk needed all the more in a situation in which the influence of Švehla was in clear decline. On the basis of this political pact, Hodža was first reintegrated in the cabinet as minister for agriculture in September 1932 and, after the 1935 elections, he served as prime minister, taking office in November. Hodža had a large power base in Slovakia and controlled a large sector of the Agrarian Party. Without the political support of the Hodža faction, Masaryk and later Beneš would not have had the necessary parliamentary support to create a cabinet of their liking or to hold the rightist tendencies within the Agrarians in check; as it was, they were able to do both these things, in spite of all the difficulties, until 1938.

The German Social Democrats and Agrarians, although defeated in the elections, remained in the government coalition supporting the new Hodža cabinet. Although their representatives now had less important portfolios than before, their presence in the government was of crucial importance, providing an alternative to the SdP on its electoral terrain, the German electorate. The German Social Democratic Party held a congress shortly after the elections, where its main representatives invited the national government to launch an employment plan for the Sudeten regions in order to "win the German workers back to democracy." The leaders of the German Christian Social Party also expressed loyal positions, which would be rewarded by the party's inclusion in the government in 1936. Probably to avoid the marginalization of the party, the BdL representatives in Parliament expressed the willingness of their party to collaborate with the other democratic forces (parliamentary debate of

25 June 1935, quoted in Brügel 1967, 272), but defectionist tendencies within the party will again emerge in the coming years.

The democratic coalition came very close to crumbling on the occasion of the Beneš's election to the presidency in December 1935. Masaryk, now 85 years old and in bad health—a year earlier he had suffered a stroke, which paralyzed his left side and impaired his eyesight—had just resigned, explicitly naming Beneš as his desired successor. The large majority by which Beneš was elected in the end (340 votes out of 440) does not reflect the true divisions in the political arena at that moment: the forces wanting to defend the democratic system and isolate the SdP—a project for which Beneš's election was necessary—had serious difficulty in obtaining such victory. The defectionist strategy of the Agrarian right wing clearly emerged, and the SdP again played the role of political interlocutor of both the Czech and German Agrarians. In fact, the candidacy of Foreign Minister Beneš was not welcomed by Beran and the right wing of the Agrarians, who supported a different candidate, Bohumil Nemec, a politically obscure Czech academic of nationalist orientations. The political coalitions behind the two candidates can be summarized as follows: the two Czechoslovak Socialist parties, the Czech Social Party, the German Social Democrats, and the Christian People's Party backed Beneš. Part of the Czechoslovak and German Agrarians, the National Democrats (now allied with other extreme right-wing groups in the National Union), the Czech Small Traders, the Czech Fascists, and the SdP backed Nemec. The interest of the SdP to support a Czech nationalist for the Presidency was based on the absolute necessity of avoiding the election of Beneš, a declared enemy of Nazism and also determined to solve the problems of the Sudeten German minority by supporting the activist forces. The part of the Czechoslovak Agrarians controlled by Hodža also backed Beneš, as did the Communists, eager to avoid the election of a right-wing candidate (and so instructed by Moscow, after the strategic turn of the Comintern in 1935). The political alliance between Masaryk and Hodža was crucial in determining the outcome of the vote: the numerical weight of Hodža's supporters proved decisive in avoiding Nemec's victory, to which a rightward shift of the whole political equilibrium would certainly have followed. In fact, Beran had initially tried to commit the whole Agrarian Party to support Nemec's candidacy, mistakenly calculating the level of support within the party for his choice (Pechacek 1979a, 429). Given the opposition of the Hodža wing to Beran's plans, the Slovak HSL'S became pivotal, and both coalitions courted its leader, Andrej Hlinka. The HSL'S

leadership was finally convinced to support Beneš after an intervention by the Vatican diplomacy. When the final decision of the HSL'S became known, Nemec withdrew his candidacy, and the BdL and Beran's Agrarians gave their votes to Beneš at the last minute, in what has been called "an undignified rush to rescue the victor," while the SdP abstained (Mamatey 1973).

The elections of Beneš had the effect of giving new confidence to the democratic front, but the defectionist tendencies of the Agrarian right wing persisted, on several occasions. For example, they pushed for a friendlier foreign policy with the German Reich—a political line which would naturally have led to increased involvement of the SdP in the realignment of internal politics. In 1936 there were informal contacts between envoys from Beran and German diplomats, in which the latter were asked what foreign policy initiative the Czechoslovak government could take to improve relations with Berlin. In the same period, *Venkov* published several articles advocating a turn in foreign policy towards a more accommodating position vis-à-vis Germany. These overtures led to nothing concrete. By contrast, after the election of Beneš the BdL realigned with the DSAP and the DCVP on activist positions, fully participating in the negotiations leading to the Agreement of February 1937 between the government and the activist parties, by which the government committed to improve the conditions of the German minority. In a joint declaration by the leaders of all three parties, and in several separate interventions, for some time all significant leaders of the BdL, even Hacker, publicly supported the view that the Sudeten German minority had everything to gain from supporting the Czechoslovak state and cooperating with it, rather than pursuing unification with the SdP or annexation to the Reich.

The political equilibrium of the coalition remained precarious, however, and the BdL was particularly sensitive to the external factors affecting it. About a year later, for example, an otherwise insignificant episode sparked the crisis of activism on the internal front. On New Year's Day of 1938, *Venkov* published the wishes of several Czechoslovak public figures for Czechoslovakia for the new year. Henlein was invited to contribute, which was not usual for a Czech publication. His piece was very vague, but of rather greater political consequence were Beran's comments, which were interpreted as if he hinted at the future entry of the SdP into the government.[20] This declaration provoked protests from the Czech press and the other democratic parties but, more importantly, it sounded like a clear disavowal of the position of the activist parties—in particular that of the BdL, whose renewed attitude in defense of the

governmental minority policy and against the SdP was severely weakened. Minister Franz Spina addressed a formal protest to Hodža, who was, however, in no position to influence Beran or the right wing of the Agrarians and was therefore forced to play down the episode, maintaining that Beran's real goal was to threaten the Social Democrats and obtain concessions on the economic policy front and giving general reassurances that the SdP would not be accepted as a coalition partner (Brügel 1967, 338). Such generic assurances were insufficient to prevent an internal crisis in the BdL, however, which was soon divided by serious strife between two factions: one included Spina and was in favor of continuing an activist line; the other was led by Hacker, now president of the party, and was decidedly in favor of cooperation with the SdP. Initially, the activist faction had the upper hand, which also strengthened the activist forces within the German Christian Social Party, where antiactivist forces were also becoming increasingly vocal. But this would not last long.

The *Anschluss* of Austria in March 1938—which Hacker publicly welcomed as a "joyous event"—had the effect of giving the final blow to the Czechoslovak-German front in defense of the republic. Following a direct appeal from Henlein to the members of the activist parties to join the SdP, which unleashed panic in their rank and file, Hacker declared himself as the BdL "Bevollmächtiger" (plenipotentiary) and on 22 March declared that the party had left the government and entered the SdP under the leadership of Henlein. Under the leadership of Spina, the activist wing of the party tried to reorganize, counting on some local sections that remained loyal to the activist leaders, but this effort failed. The DCVP had the same destiny: the *Anschluss* plunged the party into panic and provided the opportunity to the rightist forces within it, favorable to an agreement with Henlein, to win the day. The party also joined the SdP, in a slightly different form than the BdL had done (the DCVP did not formally dissolve, but only "suspended its activities," and its MPs joined the SdP parliamentary group; see Schütz 1979, 289). The fear of being excluded from the "nation" or otherwise persecuted after the victory of Henlein, which now seemed increasingly likely, also pushed the Christian unions, linked to the DCVP, to join the SdP. Shortly after the *Anschluss,* Henlein announced that he would close the membership rolls of his party on May 31. Only the German Social Democrats maintained their position of loyalty to democracy and Czechoslovakia: Ludwig Czech, their leader and minister in the national government, however, resigned from both the government and the party chairmanship—he was Jewish and did not want to make the government vulnerable

to anti-Semitic propaganda in the new climate—and was replaced as party leader by Wenzel Jaksch. Czech's ministerial seat, however, remained empty, since Beran opposed the presence of the DSAP in the government in order to improve his relationship with the SdP. For its part, the SdP made clear to Hodža that it would oppose any renewed direct participation by the German Social Democrats in government (Rothschild 1974, 129). After that moment, the confrontation between the Czechoslovak government and the SdP would be increasingly driven by the international situation—namely, the aggression by the German Reich.

The Interventions of the Head of State

The presidents, first Masaryk and later Beneš, played an important role in reacting to the challenge of the SHF/SdP, in two respects. First of all, similar to the Belgian case, investigated in the next chapter, in Czechoslovakia the head of state was of crucial importance in keeping a difficult coalition of democratic forces together, preventing the emergence of centrifugal tendencies and counteracting them when they did emerge. The influence of both Masaryk and Beneš was actually decisive in forging political alliances that could stabilize the democratic coalition and reinforce the political front against extremist threats.

Secondly, they both intervened directly in the political arena with strategies intended to defend the democratic system and lessen and contain the impact of the extremists' actions. In so doing, they relied less on the formal powers granted to them by the parliamentary Czechoslovak constitution of 1920 (e.g., Hayden 1922; Mortati 1946; Burian 1967) than on the informal practices made possible by the political charisma of Masaryk himself, the founding father of the republic, who during his fifteen-year presidential tenure acquired broad influence on national politics. Although the president formally acquired new powers with the laws passed to confront the difficulties of the Depression and the anti-extremist legislation of 1933-36, his influence on the development of the Sudeten German crisis depended much more on his political prestige than on any formalized powers. Masaryk had in fact contributed to establish presidential powers, which went well beyond the formal competencies established in the Constitution of 1920 and which Beneš, once elected, largely retained (Slapnicka 1969 and 1973). Masaryk managed to acquire decisive influence on foreign policy, the coalition-building process, and, to a lesser extent, economic policy. These also were the main areas in which Beneš exercised his political influence during the most difficult years of the Sudeten crisis. Needless to say,

the president could also rely on his prestige to directly address and influence public opinion, an important asset in times of crisis.

The strategy of the president and the Castle for counteracting the challenge that Henlein's party represented after 1933 was, according to a pattern that we will find in other circumstances in the course of this analysis, twofold—a mix of repressive and accommodative attitudes. On the one hand, they wanted to continue to strengthen relations with the loyal German parties and make efforts to solve the problems of the German minority in agreement with them, to stop the hemorrhage of Sudeten German electors from the activist parties. On the other hand, they planned to use a strong hand against the SHF—conflicting with the right wing of the Agrarians, which was essential for the stability of the government, as stated earlier. After his election to the presidency at the end of 1935, Beneš continued in the footsteps of his illustrious predecessor, intervening directly in the political arena and exploiting the political influence and prestige he had inherited from Masaryk. As explained in more detail in the next section, he traveled incessantly throughout the country during 1936 and 1937, especially in the German-inhabited regions, giving speeches and public conferences in which he addressed the problem of national minorities and publicized the will of the government to meet all reasonable requests for equitable treatment for all citizens. Furthermore, he directly instructed several ministries to allocate their spending to German-inhabited areas in proportion to their population. In this area as well, Beneš's influence rested on the precedent of Masaryk, who during the previous years had managed on several occasions to impose his candidate as minister of finance.[21]

The Executive and Defensive measures

The Czechoslovak government and the democratic parties reacted to the SdP by using both repressive and accommodative strategies, which they pursued with equal vigor. The former course of action mainly consisted of reinforcing the legal apparatus for the repression of extremist propaganda and threats to public order. The "incorporation" side of the defensive strategy was mainly made up of policy concessions to the Sudeten German minority and appeals to the public by high-ranking figures in the state in order to convince them not to abandon their faith in democracy. Such accommodative strategies—although mainly enacted by Czech or Slovak politicians, such as Beneš or Hodža—had the clear goal of strengthening the position of the German activist parties and increasing their chances in the electoral struggle with

Table 4.3 Defensive Measures Used against the Sudeten German Extreme Right-Wing Parties, 1933–1938

Defensive Measures	Status
Ban	Enacted against DNP and DNSAP on the basis of existing legislation (later lifted for DNP with the aim of allowing a "disturbance list" for Henlein in the 1935 elections). New party ban law passed (October 1933).
Explicit electoral barriers	The SHF forced to change its official name on the eve of the elections
Electoral thresholds and biases	The SdP is slightly underrepresented in the 1935 elections, despite the high proportionality of the electoral system.
Special legislation	Reinforced in all areas, although restrictive norms already existed.
On institutional core	New restrictions on the conduct of public officials (July 1933). Extensive emergency powers for the executive in case of internal danger; militarization of border districts; legal possibility of deviating from administrative procedures (May 1936).
On public order	Law of 1920 on the state of siege reiterated (July 1933). Limitations on freedom of movement for foreigners (May 1936). Prohibition of uniforms (October 1936).
On propaganda	Special protection of courts, armed forces, public authorities in general; partially granted also to political parties (June 1933). Prohibition of foreign publications and films harmful to the interests of the state and all newspapers opposed to the territorial integrity and the "republican-democratic" form of state (July 1933). Prohibition of incitement to hatred against individuals or groups because of their adherence to the democratic-republican form of state (July 1934). Prohibition of all political symbols showing hostility to the origin, integrity and independence of the republic (October 1936).
Other laws and provisions	Introduction of governmental approval for elected mayors (July 1933).

Table 4.3 Continued

Defensive Measures	Status
Access to state radio	Data not available
Secret police repression	Data not available
"Public" police repression	Strong implementation of the 1936 legislation in the Sudeten regions
Appeals to public opinion	Large use after 1935, especially in the Sudeten regions.
Policy concessions	Large concessions to the German activist parties for their constituencies. Formalized in an agreement with the government (February 1937).
Negotiations	Intensive in 1937–38, but no concrete outcome for the international situation.
Creation of alternative organizations	No

Henlein's SdP. Unfortunately for Czechoslovak democracy, the deterioration of the international situation and the diplomatic attack on Czechoslovakia culminating in the Munich Conference forced the country to yield to the Nazis before they could achieve the desired effects in full. Table 4.3 summarizes the defensive strategies enacted by the Czechoslovak executive against the Sudeten German extreme right.[22]

One of the most visible repressive measures enacted in Czechoslovakia during those years was the law of 25 October 1933 "concerning suspension of activities and dissolution of political parties," on the basis of which a "party" (defined very broadly as to cover all sorts of groups and associations) could be suspended or dissolved by the government if, by its activities, "the independence, the constitutional unity, the integrity, the democratic-republican form, or the security of the Czechoslovak Republic was gravely endangered" (Hartmann 1933; Adler 1934). The judgment as to whether a political group was illegal rested with the government, which could make a decision by means of a decree, subject to *ex post* judicial review. The ban contained in the law also affected "affiliated organizations" of any kind, such as economic enterprises or recreational or cultural organizations promoting the aims of the unlawful organization in any measure. The statute also contained "post-prohibition"

measures, which were created to prevent any attempt to reconstitute the dissolved party under another name or in another form and included the possibility of severely restricting the basic freedoms of any individual who had been involved with the outlawed groups (Capoccia 2002b). In the case of the dissolution of the party (although not in the case of suspension), its MPs and its members holding seats in local representative bodies would lose their mandates. The vacancies in the national Parliament would not be filled until the following elections, in which the name of the dissolved party could not be used. Its former members or representatives could not hold any political office, whether by election or appointment, for a period of three years following the dissolution or suspension order. This law was originally conceived as provisional and was renewed several times between 1934 and 1938.

This law was applied to "validate ex post" the measures taken against the Sudeten German Nationalist and Nazis. In fact, the renewed activism of the DNP and the DNSAP in the Sudeten regions, together with the increased danger for the security of the country that these two political formations represented after the Nazi takeover in Germany, pushed the Czechoslovak government to suspend these parties shortly before the final approval of the party ban law. On top of this was the example of the Austrian government, which had banned the Nazi party in June 1933. The Supreme Court, in its decisions of 1 July and 7 October 1933 in the "People's Sport" trials (*Volkssportsprozesse*—see the abstracts of the Court decisions in Sander 1935, 415–32) against the youth organization of the DNSAP, created in 1929 after the example of the German SA, had stated that the DNSAP was a subversive organization working towards the violent overthrow of the republic, and had indicted some of its members for violation of the "Law on the protection of the Republic" of 1923 (Zeman 1997, 118). The government accordingly issued administrative orders suspending the DNP and the DNSAP, basing its decisions formally on an old Austro-Hungarian law of 1867 restricting the freedom of associations, which was formally still in force in Czechoslovakia.[23] The leaders of the DNSAP, to preempt the forced dissolution, dismantled the party and fled to Germany. The trials unveiled compromising material about the DNP as well. The DNP was therefore suspended—also to prevent members of the DNSAP from finding an alternative political home—and it similarly dissolved itself before being outlawed (Hromadko, Richter, and Wende 1981, 681–82).[24] Although the party ban law was passed after the DNP and the DNSAP had been outlawed, its relevance went beyond the mere *ex post* legalization of those

measures: first of all, it gave the government the opportunity to dissolve the DNSAP for good in November 1933, and the Mandate Senate of the Supreme Administrative Tribunal the legal basis to confirm on two occasions the decision to dissolve the two parties that had been the most irreducible enemies of Czechoslovak democracy to that date.[25] Moreover, in order not to be directly affected by the law, the Czechoslovak Communists and Fascists adapted to the new legal requirements by changing their by-laws and constitutions as well as their political tactics, as did the SHF in the first years of its existence, especially regarding its propaganda. The internal statutes of the SHF were also, from a formal standpoint, impeccably democratic, although this did not stop Henlein, especially after he reinforced his links with the Nazi government in Germany, from exerting absolute power within the party (e.g., Brügel 1967, 316). As mentioned earlier, the government was only able to force the party to change its name on the very eve of the elections of 1935, which may have put it at a disadvantage in the electoral competition. The official motivation for this was that the expression "Front" in a party's name was not acceptable in a democracy. The same political goal—of creating some difficulty for Henlein's party in electoral competition—prompted the decision to lift the ban on the DNP, again on the eve of the elections. Allowing the participation of this party in the competition meant that there would be a rival for Henlein's SdP. Neither action achieved the desired effect. The change of name did not prevent the SdP's landslide, in which it received 1,200,000 votes, while the DNP, which formed a common list with the small German Democratic Party, obtained only 26,600 votes, only electing one candidate to the upper house (Brügel 1967, 266).

Legislative repression of antisystem challenges was by no means, however, limited to the party ban law: anti-extremist legislation had already been adopted by the Czechoslovak political elites in 1920–23, when the radical opposition of the ethnic minorities, the emergence of the Communist Party, and some stirrings in the Slovak camp created severe difficulties for the republic (V. Beneš 1973). The law of 1920 on the state of siege was repeatedly invoked for the restoration of public order in several regions where there had been revolts (especially in the Sudeten regions). The most important piece of legislation passed in those years was the 1923 "Law for the Protection of the Republic," which provided the government with a complex set of rules and norms to limit and react to extremist behavior (Epstein 1923; Adler 1929; Capoccia 2002b).[26]

Further pieces of anti-extremist legislation were passed between 1933 and

1936 in direct response to the challenge of the Sudeten extreme right. In 1933, special measures intended to ensure the loyalty of public officials were introduced. The new law prohibited the participation of all public officials in any association openly or secretly challenging "the sovereignty of the Republic, its independence, integrity, constitutional unity or the republican-democratic form," as well as in any actions apt to undermine public confidence in civic institutions. After the several restrictions to political propaganda introduced in 1923 with the Law for the Protection of the Republic, two new laws were passed in 1933 introducing further restrictions on political propaganda. The laws extended special protection from libelous attacks to all public authorities and even to political parties[27] and empowered the government to prohibit circulation of foreign publications and to suspend the publication of subversive periodicals and newspapers for definite periods. Another law passed in July 1934 protected citizens holding democratic political opinions: it made it unlawful to incite against individuals or groups because of their adherence to the republican-democratic form and organization of the state (Capoccia 2002b).

The limitations on political propaganda set by the legislation mentioned above certainly influenced the SdP's propaganda strategies. As described above, Henlein was very careful for quite a long time not to attack openly the legitimacy of Czechoslovak democracy or its territorial frontiers, as this would have constituted a breach of the law. In his memorandum to Hitler of November 1937, in which Henlein requested the direct intervention of Germany in Czechoslovakia, he declared explicitly that "the SdP must conceal its abeyance to National Socialism as *Weltanschauung* and as political principle" (Brügel 1967, 332).

In 1936, after the successes of the SdP in domestic politics and the increasing deterioration of the international situation in Europe, the Czechoslovak democratic elites turned again to the repressive apparatus of the state, endowing it with new weapons. Two important new pieces of legislation were passed: the "Act for the Defense of the State" and a new law on political symbols and propaganda. In the parliamentary discussion, the representatives of the SdP strenuously opposed both laws, maintaining that they were antidemocratic and restricted the rights to free expression and political participation of legitimate political forces and, moreover, that they unduly discriminated against the German minority because of their special provisions for the border regions. Demonstrating their opposition to this line of thought, the German activist parties openly supported the legislation and even the Slovak autonomists, who

had been recent victims of the new restrictions to political propaganda, voted in favor of it. The Communists, who were in principle opposed to the law, also acknowledged its necessity in the parliamentary debate (Brügel 1967, 295–96; Lipscher 1979b, 161).

The 201-article Act for the Defense of the State has been defined as "the most elaborate, circumspect and comprehensive preparation existing in a nondictatorial state for the ultimate emergency of war" (Loewenstein 1938a, 621).[28] The law would be applied if internal events within the state or on its borders endangered, to a high degree, the integrity of the state, the republican-democratic form of government, the constitution, or public peace and order. If one of the above conditions occurred, then a "state of military preparedness in case of war"—in other words, the introduction of martial law and other exceptional measures—could be invoked. As a preparation to this eventuality, nearly all the "border districts" (officially defined in a separate decree) within a distance of 25 kilometers from the border, were militarized. Politically unreliable persons could be expelled from those areas. Foreigners could be forbidden to enter factories that were located in the border districts and whose products were even remotely related to war exigencies. Violations of this law were to be tried under due process of law—however, trial would take place in closed court and the accused would be compelled to choose their lawyer from an official list from which all lawyers in any way connected to the SdP had been excluded. In the border districts, the police stations were remanned almost exclusively by Czech personnel and the whole economy was submitted to supervision by the military authorities, whose competencies extended to authorization power for every construction or even modification of buildings. The government was the sole arbiter of whether the conditions for the enactment of the law were fulfilled. In this case, the government constituted itself in a "Supreme Defense Council," equipped with almost unchallengeable powers for controlling the entire life of the country. Moreover, in a situation when the law was invoked, all state organs could deviate from normal procedures and adopt exceptional measures if deemed necessary (Lipscher 1979b, 160). The law of 1936 de facto foresaw a situation of exception in which the 1920 constitution would be superseded and the government would be invested with dictatorial powers.

The 1936 law regulating the use of political symbols was one of the most elaborate legislative acts of this kind existing in any country at the time. Under the new restrictions, "local" and "foreign" symbolism was formally impossible

on Czechoslovak territory. More specifically, the new law prohibited the use of uniforms or any other political symbols (including special methods of greeting) that permitted recognition of the affiliation of individuals or groups to a party that had been suspended or banned on the basis of the 1933 party ban law. The law forbade the wearing or showing in public of any emblem indicating a political opinion hostile to the origin, independence, and integrity of the Czechoslovak Republic.

These new provisions were implemented strictly and were generally effective both in maintaining public order and in limiting Nazi and irredentist political propaganda in the German-inhabited areas of Czechoslovakia. To give an example, in the course of 1937, when the Czechoslovak government's defense of democracy was still relatively uninfluenced by the international situation, 2,000 books, 74 lieder books, 65 calendars, 288 magazines, and 183 newspapers were prohibited in the Sudeten regions on the basis of the 1936 legislation (Slapnicka 1970, 80; see also Wiskemann 1967, 244). SdP members could not systematically exert political violence as, for example, the extreme right militias had done—as explained elsewhere in this book—in Germany, Italy, and Finland years before, and a SdP militia (the *Freiwilliger Schützkorps,* FS) was only founded at the end of April 1938, when the situation was virtually out of control for the Czech authorities.

The strong police control in the Sudeten regions gave rise to many trials for violations of the 1936 laws. Although this never amounted to a racial persecution of the Germans, as was claimed in SdP propaganda (Brügel 1967, 333–35), it was certainly a cause of resentment in those regions.[29] This situation rendered the enactment of incorporation strategies of defense even more urgent (and at the same time more difficult, reproducing a typical dilemma). Concessions to the German minority, made in agreement with the activist forces and intended in particular to distinguish between Henlein's followers and the German minority as such in the eyes of the public, were a response to the identification of the two made in SdP propaganda.

There is little doubt that the strategy of policy concessions to the German minority was conceived as a deliberate reaction to Henlein and the SdP. The adoption of a more open attitude by the Czechoslovak government towards a policy of serious concessions to the German minority can in fact be observed starting immediately after the SdP's electoral victory in 1935. In June of that year, Minister of Education Emil Franke, at the Congress of his party, the Czechoslovak National Socialists, declared himself in favor of "equal treatment

and justice for all citizens, disregarding their nationality" (Brügel 1967, 592). With the support of the cabinet, the activist ministers, Czech (Social Democrats) and Spina (Agrarians) took particular care to provide the services within their competence (public works and health care) on the basis of careful adherence to the principle of equal treatment of all citizens, independent of nationality. Moreover, in the 1935 budget the government over-allotted resources in several sectors to regions with a Sudeten German majority. For example, for road works the Sudeten regions obtained 17 million Czechoslovak Crowns while the Czechoslovak regions were allotted 14 million. The analogous figures for the construction of bridges were 9 and 11 million, respectively (Brügel 1967, 294).

In November 1936, after an official declaration in which Prime Minister Hodža announced that the government would take the initiative in the matter of minority policy, formal negotiations were initiated with the activist parties on the elaboration of policies that would improve the conditions of the Sudeten German minority in several areas. The main political aim of the activist parties in negotiating this agreement was that of winning back a majority of the Sudeten German electorate in the context of the preservation of the democratic system and the isolation of the SdP. Moreover, the activists had to take particular care not to create a situation that might inadvertently favor the SdP: this is why they explicitly abandoned the request for territorial, and even cultural, autonomy. ("We don't want a Nazi teacher be left alone to do whatever he wants," the DSAP leader Wenzel Jaksch declared in those weeks.) Even in their request that more Germans be employed in the state administration, they were concerned with the risk of taking on antidemocratic elements.

At the beginning of 1937 the German activists drafted a series of requests for the improvement of the rights and living conditions of the Sudeten German minority and submitted them to Hodža, who accepted them in principle. The requests of the activist parties to the Czechoslovak government mainly regarded the provision of employment opportunities in the regions that had been most affected by the economic crisis; a reinforcement of the German presence in the public administration—with the goal of reaching the same quota as in the population[30]—and concessions with respect to the possibility of using the German language. The negotiations involved Jaksch (Social Democrats), Hacker (Agrarians), and Hans Schütz (Christian Social Party), and led to the Agreement of 18 February 1937. The agreement consisted of a memoran-

dum issued by the government. It did not have legal force, but it was "the strongest extraparliamentary measure that Hodža could take without changing the Constitution" (Wingfield 1989, 151). During the negotiations, Beneš, Hodža, and Foreign Minister Kamil Krofta actively used their influence in order to achieve an outcome that was satisfactory for the Sudeten activist parties. In this, they had to overcome the resistance of the Czechoslovak right-wing forces, both in government—the Agrarian right wing—and in the opposition—National Democracy and the Fascists.

The activists considered the Agreement of 18 February "a good start." Even though it was never applied in full, given the short time that was left to an independent and democratic Czechoslovakia, it did yield some positive results. For example, there were tax refunds for some German-owned industries, several public commissions for German firms, and more scholarships for German students (Slapnicka 1970). In the realm of public works, the figures in the 1938 budget recall those, already reported, for the year 1935: 67% of public investment in roads and bridges was directed to Czechoslovak regions (109 million crowns) and 32.4% to German regions (52 million).[31] For the construction of public buildings, 58.5% of expenditures were to be used in Czechoslovak regions, and 41.5% in Sudeten German ones. (As table 4.1 makes clear, the Sudeten German population constituted about a quarter of the total population of Czechoslovakia.)

In previous years, many commissions for public works, even in the Sudeten regions, were awarded to Czech firms, which in most cases offered better contractual terms. These firms provided their own workers of Czech ethnicity to carry out the work, even though unemployment in the Sudeten regions, as a consequence of the Depression, was high (Nečas 1937). The leader of the Sudeten German Social Democrats, Ludwig Czech, was the minister for public works in 1934–35, and he had already ordered that the workforce for publicly commissioned projects be recruited from the regions where the work was done. This, however, was only valid for the commissions given by his own ministry; after 1935, when he was assigned a different portfolio, this directive was not always followed scrupulously by his successor in the new government. With the agreement of 18 February 1937, this situation would change substantially: *all* public institutions commissioning public works were to require the utilization of a local workforce and were empowered to deviate from the principle of accepting the cheapest tender and to apply different criteria in reaching decisions on the award of contracts. Unemployment among the Ger-

man population in fact decreased between 1933 and 1938 at a rapid pace: starting at 338,000 in 1933, it went down to 234,000 in 1937 and then to 184,000 in 1938. This trend was in line with the overall national trend of falling unemployment (Teichova 1988), so it is difficult to tell how much of this decline was due to these political decisions.[32] More precise data on the assignment of public contracts are unavailable, but the figures reported clearly show that in those years the Sudeten German regions were not being discriminated against in any sense.

The most visible area in which the demands of the activist parties were accepted was the field of ethnic balance within the bureaucracy: in 1937 about 1,500 Germans were hired as officials and 5,500 as workers in the state bureaucracy (Slapnicka 1970, 79). More precise data is not available, but it must be remembered that a substantial number of Germans were already employed in the state bureaucracy even prior to 1937; that in the army about 7 percent of officers belonged to the Sudeten German ethnic group, and that employment in schools already roughly reflected the existing ethnic balance (Wiskemann 1967). Moreover, Czech, appointed health minister in 1935, was very active in hiring Germans to state positions which fell within his sphere of competence, so much so that at the end of his tenure the percentage of Germans in some categories of health service employees was close to reflecting the percentage of Germans in the overall population. The Czechoslovak Social Democratic ministers of railways, justice, and social affairs also contributed to this policy line-for example, more than 4,000 Germans were hired in the railways in 1937 alone—(Brügel 1967, 312). Furthermore, Beneš called on *all* cabinet ministers to allot at least 20 percent of the expenditures of their ministries to Sudeten German regions.

Thus the February 1937 Agreement achieved some concrete results, which is all the more remarkable if one takes into account the difficult situation in which the implementation of the Agreement took place. On the one hand, the situation in the Sudeten German regions was turbulent: Henlein's deliberate tactic in the months following February 1937 was to create as much unrest as possible in order to polarize positions and render the satisfaction of the needs of the Sudeten German minority impossible in a democratic framework (Brügel 1967, 310). On the other hand, it was objectively difficult for the national government to support concessions to the German minority in public at a moment when the Nazi Reich was becoming increasingly aggressive.

Another "incorporation" strategy of democratic defense to which the

Czechoslovak democratic rulers resorted after 1935 was that of ad hoc appeals to the public, and especially to German voters, in order to convince them that their grievances could be redressed within the framework of the democratic and multinational republic. The main protagonist of such appeals was President Beneš who, following in the footsteps of the late Masaryk, abandoned in his public interventions the rhetoric of the (mono-)national state and openly maintained that the president was as much the representative of the German as of the Czech ethnic group. On various occasions, new Foreign Minister Krofta expressed similar views, often before a Sudeten German audience. Several important figures in the German activist parties publicly endorsed these statements. Throughout 1936 Beneš traveled incessantly in the Sudeten German regions addressing the population—often in German—reassuring them of the willingness of the government to address their grievances. In his speech in Eisgrub, for example, he maintained that Czechs and Germans enjoyed the same rights in Czechoslovakia. In Nikolsburg he said that the thrust of his politics was the loyal and amicable cooperation between Czechs and Germans in the common fatherland. In Brno he addressed German students with the contention that differences in national and linguistic identity should not become grounds for division. In Znaim he explained that he favored the German minority obtaining from the Czech majority everything it needed for its economic prosperity (Brügel 1967, 294-97; see also Beneš 1937).

The most important public intervention by Beneš was certainly the speech he made in Reichenberg in August 1936. This speech had a politico-programmatic character and gave rise to some important expectations. In it, Beneš explicitly addressed the problems and demands of the German minority and declared his determined will to find a solution acceptable to all parties. He said:

> I know that our Germans have practical reasons for protests, as well as specific desires and demands. In the matter regarding the language and the school the controversies are not of a fundamental nature, and reasonable practical solutions can be easily found. I am not afraid to say that in these matters mistakes have been made, which should not be replicated, for example, that workers or firms are brought from Czech-inhabited regions to execute work in Sudeten regions in which there are local unemployed. The German governing parties have already discussed these matters . . . I, as Head of State, will be a mediator between the two parties and a helper of both. (*Frankfurter Zeitung,* 20 August 1936. Quoted in Brügel 1967, 297).

Beneš's public appeals continued with the same intensity in 1937, in defense of the Agreement with the activist parties signed in February of that year. In both Czech and Sudeten German areas he reaffirmed that the German demands were justified, and his will and that of the government to give them satisfaction. He even used the German language to address the German minorities of predominantly Czech areas, as in his public intervention in Olmütz in August 1937. Beneš also publicly addressed the Czechs, speaking in favor of the policy of making justifiable concessions to the German minority as the only means of achieving peaceful coexistence on Czechoslovak territory. For example, in his 1937 Christmas radio address to the Czechoslovak population (read in both Czech and German), he urged the Czechs to be patient and ready to accept the justified demands of the German minority (Brügel 1967, 336).

The 1938 Crisis

As explained in chapter 3, negotiations with extremists constitute a further possible strategy of defense, mainly as a way of splitting the antisystem actor. Although repeated contacts between the national government and the SdP can be documented in 1937–38 (Kral 1964) and although in these informal meetings the political requests of the SdP were discussed,[33] it must be stressed that especially after 1937 these meetings hardly represented a strategy that the Prague government was pursuing in isolation to cope with the SdP challenge. In fact, the relations between the Prague government and the Sudeten German minority became fully determined by international forces at the turn of the year 1937–38: during the last year of the existence of the First Republic the strategy of Henlein and the SdP was entirely dictated by Berlin. In November 1937, Henlein sent Hitler a secret report in which he maintained that a solution to the Sudeten problem was only thinkable in terms of annexation of the Sudeten territories by the Reich, and repeated that he had to conceal his allegiance to the National Socialist cause in his internal propaganda to avoid repression (Slapnicka 1970, 87). On 20 February 1938 Hitler declared before the Reichstag that the Reich had a duty to protect the ten million Germans living outside its boundaries, thereby rendering public his plans of conquest and expansion to the East, of which Austria and Czechoslovakia were to be the first victims (Luža 1964, 110). In March 1938 Austria was annexed, which considerably stirred up the situation in the Sudeten German districts and caused the collapse of the BdL and the German Christian Social Party. Shortly afterwards, Hodža had "informational

conversations" with Henlein, who demanded and obtained the expulsion from the national government of the Sudeten German Social Democratic Party, the only survivor of the activist front.[34]

At this stage, the contacts between the Czechoslovak government and the SdP intensified, but the stakes of this negotiations were no longer internal order or the maintenance of democracy or even the preservation of territorial unity in Czechoslovakia—by now the governing framework was the perspective of a suicidal war with Germany. The only way in which Czechoslovakia could avoid such a war (or have some hope to fight it without being occupied in a few weeks) was through an intervention by the foreign powers with which it was allied—that is, principally France and, after 1935, the Soviet Union.[35] In other words, in the convulsive months between March and September 1938, the Czechoslovak authorities were no longer free to deal with the Sudeten problem as they had been as late as 1937. Their internal reactions were conditioned, and in some cases dictated, by international circumstances.

The crisis of France and its increasing dependence on Britain in international policy rendered the position of Czechoslovakia much more fragile than it might have looked on paper: London had no binding commitment with Czechoslovakia, but it did have an interest in maintaining peace in Europe, and therefore it exerted substantial pressure on Prague to arrive at a settlement with the Sudeten Germans—that is, with the SdP—in order to avoid German intervention (Slapnicka 1970, 88). The Czechoslovak government was de facto forced by the British government to negotiate and make substantial concessions to Henlein's emissaries, who had no intention of arriving at a compromise, of course, no matter how favorable. They were in fact mere instruments of Berlin's foreign policy, now actively seeking the destruction of Czechoslovakia in the short run: in essence, Berlin's instructions to Henlein were "always to negotiate and not to let the link be broken, on the other hand always demand more than could be granted by the other side."[36] Henlein put forward radical demands for autonomy—the *Volksschutzgesetze* mentioned above—in his party's congress at the end of April 1938. These demands, if accepted, would have meant the end of the authority of the Czechoslovak state over the Sudeten regions. A few days later, the British and French government urged Prague to make concessions. In this situation, Prague started to seek an agreement with the SdP on the institutional position of the German minority in the state, and also softened the special police restrictions in the Sudeten

regions: in May 1938 the police were ordered "to overlook minor offenses" (Luža 1964, 120).[37]

It was in this context that the "May crisis" came about: in mid-May 1938 Czechoslovak intelligence started receiving reports of large-scale troop movements in the neighboring regions of Germany, Bavaria and Saxony. On 21 May Beneš, in his role of supreme commander of armed forces, declared partial mobilization, calling to arms a part of the reserves. There were, however, no movements of troops at the German border: Beneš was probably misled by a German intelligence game, or else the Czech services made a mistake (Zeman 1997, 122). By declaring mobilization, Beneš wanted to show firmness and unite the Western powers against Germany, but the move ended up as a tactical blunder and had negative consequences for both the international and the internal situation of Czechoslovakia. In fact, it irritated the Western powers, at the same time giving support to the image of Beneš as a warmonger that the Germans had been pushing. Internally, Beneš's decision indirectly supported the SdP: local elections in the German areas were scheduled for the end of May, and the SdP could easily capitalize on the mobilization by describing it as an antidemocratic attempt to intimidate the Sudeten German voters. The party reported a landslide victory, gathering about 90 percent of the German vote,[38] and definitely gaining credit as the main representative of the whole German minority.

Under pressure from London, in the form of direct intervention by a British mediator, Lord Runciman, at a certain stage of the negotiations, the Czechoslovak government—or rather Beneš himself, who had taken the lead in the negotiations—negotiated and proposed four successive plans in which increasingly larger autonomy was given to the German regions until the SdP's original demands were de facto accepted in their entirety in the first days of September 1938 (Luža 1964, 139). At this stage, the SdP created an incident in which it claimed that one of its leaders had been struck by a policeman, which Henlein then used to break off negotiations with Prague.[39] Thereafter, the SdP decisively adopted the strategy of confrontation, staging demonstrations and further incidents that developed into a full-scale revolt (carefully planned in accordance with Berlin), a naked attempt to seize power in the Sudeten regions. This led the Czechoslovak government to declare martial law in several German districts, thereby managing to contain the revolt. At this stage, the SdP issued an ultimatum against the government, which responded by resort-

ing to the special legislation, suspending civil liberties, declaring a state of emergency, and dissolving the SdP (Slapnicka 1970, 94). The SdP leaders fled across the borders to Germany and organized military actions against Prague from there. With the flight of Henlein and the dissolution of the SdP, the international nature of the Sudeten problem finally became incontrovertible, and any further decision on the Sudeten German side was definitely left up to Hitler.

The subsequent diplomatic events leading to the breakup of Czechoslovakia are well known, and an analysis of them is beyond the scope of this book. Externally induced negotiations, the implementation of the emergency laws, and the general mobilization of 22 September 1938 (Zeman 1997, 128), once it seemed that war was unavoidable, were not sufficient to save the republic, whose destiny was ultimately decided by the major European powers. At the Munich Conference of September 1938, the leaders of the main European powers decided in favor of the annexation of the Sudeten regions to Germany, an event that de facto marked the end of a democratic and independent Czechoslovakia. Shortly afterwards, the SdP merged into the NSDAP. In March 1939 Nazi Germany also annexed Bohemia and Moravia, while Slovakia became independent.

Following a pattern that we will observe in other cases, in Czechoslovakia between 1933 and 1938 the rise of a strong ideological antisystem actor, the SHF/SdP, triggered projects of political reaggregation in some sectors of the establishment that destabilized the democratic governing majority. The right-wing circles of both the Sudeten German and the Czechoslovak Agrarian parties—the former fearing electoral losses, the latter seeing the chance of an increase in power and influence—devised and pursued the construction of a right-wing alliance that would include the Sudeten German and the Czech extreme right. Had it been realized, this project would have made democratic breakdown in Czechoslovakia likely well before 1938. The opposite front, led by Masaryk and Beneš, whose influence in keeping the democratic coalition together cannot be overestimated, managed to counteract these centrifugal tendencies and to stop this project. When Henlein's party, after the 1935 elections, became a known (and unexpectedly large) quantity, the democratic forces continued their fight to keep the democratic coalition together and intensified their efforts in defense of the democratic system. The strategy of defense that was adopted against the SdP included both militancy and incor-

poration measures—a mix that we will find in other contexts. Both accommodative and repressive measures were of remarkable intensity: the incorporation measures of strong policy concessions and repeated public appeals, with the purpose of "winning the hearts and minds" of most Sudeten Germans to democracy and interethnic coexistence, were the necessary complement to the impressively rapid endowment of the Czechoslovak state with forceful repressive instruments to react to any internal challenge. Czechoslovakia, however, did not become a dictatorship: the democratic process was not stopped altogether. Its rulers chose the path of turning the political system into a fully fledged "militant democracy," rather than kill democracy "from above," as had happened to all the other new democracies in Central-Eastern Europe. Czechoslovak democracy in the interwar years until the Nazi conquest therefore managed to avoid both paths to breakdown identified in chapter 1: the takeover from antidemocratic forces and the stifling by its own establishment.

Belgium

> The parliamentary elections of May 24, 1936 accelerated the process of destabilization of the Belgian regime that had been ongoing for some years. Three parties, Rex, the VNV and the Communists, which held together a fourth of the seats in the Chamber, did not accept the fundamentals of the parliamentary regime. Their influence reached beyond the boundaries of their parties. Then followed a turbulent time of conspiracies and coalitions (*concentraties*), agitation from the left, but first of all from the right. This process of destabilization would be put under control only in the summer of 1937.
>
> —EMMANUEL GÉRARD, *De katholieke partij in crisis*

In 1936–39, the Belgian democratic system had to confront its most turbulent years since World War I, its very existence put in danger by the conquest of almost a quarter of the seats in the lower chamber by three ideologically antisystem parties: Rex, the *Vlaams Nationaal Verbond* (VNV), and the Communist Party (PCB). Of these, the first two—Rex in particular—given their size, their aggressive political style, and their ability to cause deep divisions within the governing majority and most of all within the Catholic Party, were characterized by relational anti-systemness too. Although the Communists doubled their share of seats in the 1936 national elections, they were unable to engender serious divisions within the "ideologically bordering" Socialist Party—although a small minority within that party emerged to advocate a Popular Front on the French and Spanish models of the time—and hence were unable to endanger the system seriously from the extreme left. At the right end of the political spectrum, on the other hand, the situation was very different: for a short but significant period, dynamic Rexist leader Leon Degrelle managed to attack the Catholic politicians—which had traditionally been in government for many decades—and in so doing attract a large number of Catholic

votes, as he pursued his declared goal of taking over the democratic system. At the same time, the success of the Flemish nationalist VNV in Flanders gave authoritarian and *völkisch* political expression to a longstanding cleavage of Belgian society. Belgian democracy survived these challenges thanks to two factors: first, the strong commitment of the Catholic Party to cooperation with the Liberals and the Socialists, in Belgium called the Belgian Workers' Party (*Parti Ouvrière Belge,* POB), although in an unstable and ideologically heterogeneous coalition; and second, the promptness showed by institutional actors in perceiving and reacting to the potential danger represented by the Rexists.

As in the cases of Czechoslovakia and Finland, the coalition strategy of the border party, in this case the Catholic Party, proved decisive in determining the final outcome of the crisis. As the analysis below shows in more detail, the decision to continue cooperation with the other parties of government through the crisis was opposed by a strong internal minority of the party—which favored defection from the government and pursued a different political coalition that included Rex and the VNV—and could be maintained only at the cost of continuous internal struggles. The two main factors characterizing a border party are present in the Catholic Party during the 1936–39 crisis. First of all, both Rex and the VNV owed their success in the 1936 elections to votes coming largely from the Catholic Party, which had traditionally been the largest Belgian party—before those elections. The party lost about 400,000 votes to Rex and the VNV, about a quarter of its total vote of four years earlier. Secondly, the party had a de facto veto power on the constitution of any democratic coalition. It has been maintained that the internal destabilization of the Catholic Party, for different reasons already a factor before 1936, can be considered the main cause of the destabilization of Belgian democracy in those years. The very fact that this party had unclear boundaries and a very flexible internal structure accompanied by loose discipline had allowed the system to survive its own endemic instability. The massive electoral losses of 1936 intervened at a moment in which the party was undergoing a process of internal reorganization and led to disbandment within its cadres, so that for some time the risk of its dissolution in different formations was real (Gérard 1985). Had this happened, or had the party followed the defection strategy advocated by its internal minority, no democratic majority would have been possible in Parliament. The fact that the party leadership, despite the need to recover the electoral losses, decided to continue cooperating with the other government parties in the difficult political conditions described in the rest of the chapter should be

considered a crucial factor in steering the crisis of the late 1930s towards a democratic solution. As mentioned, other factors contributed to the stabilization of the political situation (mainly the interventions of the head of state, King Leopold III) and the establishment, once it found a difficult equilibrium on a coalition including the three main parties, was ready to adopt active measures of defense against Rex.

In order to follow a single narrative thread, this analysis focuses on the Rexist challenge. The developments relative to the VNV are mentioned in the background and synthesized in the last section. The chapter traces the political trajectory of Rex first, and then focuses on the defensive strategies of democratic incumbents. A large section is devoted to the reaction of the Catholic Party, followed by a detailed analysis of the relevant interventions of the head of state and the government in critical moments.

The Rexist Challenge

The *Parti Réxiste* attacked Belgian democracy mainly with aggressive propaganda under the effective and dynamic leadership of Leon Degrelle, who determined most of the program and strategy of the movement. The Rexists did not resort to systematic political violence, unlike in Finland or in several of the breakdown cases. They had uniformed groups, but these were unarmed. The years 1936–39 do not show an increase of street demonstrations compared with the 1920s, when many demonstrations were in support of the democratic system (Maes 1987). Therefore, in the Belgian crisis of 1936–39, the right-wing extremists—apart from a few sporadic cases—did not disrupt public order but concentrated on denouncing the problems and inadequacies of the Belgian political system that were felt by large parts of the public: corruption, collusion between political and financial circles, government instability and inefficiency. In this respect, Degrelle was the party's greatest asset: he was a very talented speaker whose public speeches were very popular during the months of the political rise of Rex. Let us look at the political trajectory of Rex and its context.

The Emergence of Rex (November 1935–May 1936)

In the months of the emergence and rise of Rex, both the international situation and the internal position of Belgium were undergoing a period of marked instability. After his rise to power in January 1933 and the Nazification of Germany, Hitler started challenging the system of collective European se-

curity set up by the main European powers with the Locarno Treaties (Duroselle 1978). In March 1935 he reintroduced conscription, and in March 1936 the Rhineland was reoccupied. This last move "set to nought" the Locarno system, forcing Belgium to correct its international alignment and distance itself somewhat from France and the United Kingdom in order to maintain better relations with Germany.[1]

Internally, what were perceived as structural defects in the Belgian democratic system and numerous politico-financial scandals emerged forcefully in the national political debate. Dissatisfaction with the workings of the parliamentary system (the "regime of parties") was widespread. The "institutional" defects of the regime were subsumed mainly in two areas: First, the weakness and instability of the executive, which was generally perceived as preventing the formulation and implementation of effective long-term policies—and ultimately leading to diffuse political irresponsibility (Höjer 1946, 362). Second, the influence of political parties over the Parliament and the government, which had a similarly negative effect: the traditional parties—Catholics, Liberals, and Socialists—were internally divided into regional-linguistic, ideological, and generational factions, which rendered coalition-making difficult and majorities unstable (Perin 1960). Every Belgian government after 1936 devoted a part of its declaration of intents to the importance of a *redressement* of these two defects.

Among the effects of the Depression in Belgium (especially felt in the years 1931–34) were the financial cracks of some important banks: the *Banque du Travail* and the *Algemeene Bankvereegining* in particular. These scandals brought to light large areas of collusion between the leadership of the traditional parties and the financial elite and exposed the manipulations of some politicians as well as several cases of outright corruption. The 187 members of the lower chamber, of whom in those years about 95 percent belonged to the three traditional parties, held some 411 positions in the banks and the biggest corporations (Schoutens 1976). Cases of collusion involved members of the Catholic Party more than of the other two parties.[2] In 1932 this situation was publicly denounced, mainly by Paul Crokaert, a Catholic politician of traditional orientation, and by some Socialist figures, but it would be exploited extremely effectively by Degrelle in his propaganda, which echoed the similar campaigns against "corrupt democracy" run in France during the same years by right-wing publications such as *Gringoire* and *Candide,* which were widely sold in Belgium (Stengers 1965, 144).

Table 5.1 Seats in the Belgian Lower Chamber, 1919–1939

	1919		1921		1925		1929		1932		1936		1939	
Party	*N*	(%)	*N*	(%)	*N*	(%)	*N*	(%)	*N*	(%)	*N*	(%)	*N*	(%)
Catholic Party	73	39.2	78	40.9	75	40.1	71	38	79	42.2	61	30.2	73	36.1
Dissident Catholic Lists	—	—	2	2.2	3	1.6	6	3.2	—	—	2	1	—	—
Liberal Party	34	18.3	33	17.7	23	12.3	28	15	24	12.8	23	11.4	33	16.3
Socialist Party	70	37.6	68	36.6	78	41.7	70	37.4	73	39	70	34.7	64	31.7
Ex-Servicemen	2	1.1	1	0.5	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Frontpartij (Flemish Nationalists)	5	2.7	4	2.2	6	3.2	11	5.9	8	4.3	—	—	—	—
VNV	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	16	7.9	17	8.4
Middle Class Party	1	0.5	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Communist Party	—	—	0	—	2	1.1	1	0.5	3	1.6	9	4.5	9	4.5
Rexists	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	21	10.4	4	2
Others	1	0.5	0	—	0	—	0	—	0	—	0	—	2	1
Total	186	100	186	100	187	100	187	100	187	100	202	100	202	100

At a very young age, Leon Degrelle had become the director of the publishing department of the Catholic Action of Belgian Youth (*Action Catholique de la Jeunesse Belge*, ACJB), which in 1931 evolved into an autonomous publishing house called Rex.[3] Thanks to his remarkable energy, he turned his publishing house into a hyperactive vehicle for propaganda which increasingly exceeded the boundaries of the "merely religious" and increasingly ventured into political territory, attacking Communism, Freemasonry, high finance, and so on. He also censored the Catholic Party and several Catholic politicians and criticized them for their incompetence and passivity in not fostering enough the "Triumph of Christ," which led to growing tension with the Catholic establishment. The tension exploded at the end of 1935, leading to a definitive break between Degrelle and the Catholic Party at the beginning of 1936, shortly followed by the foundation of the Rexist Party. The basis for the new party was constituted initially by a few hundred young Catholics, mainly from the ACJB, inspired by Degrelle's passionate writing and speeches (Stengers 1965; see also, more generally, Braive 1994). The campaign that Degrelle started and would then lead transformed these few hundred supporters into around 270,000 votes in the national elections held a few months later (on the first phase of the Rexist movement, see also Buttgenbach 1936 and Étienne 1968, 9–52).

The Rise of Rex (May 1936–April 1937)

In the elections of May 1936 the Rexist Party obtained 21 MPs while the Catholic Party reported a clear defeat. The surprising success of the Rexists was accompanied by a trebling of the seats of the Communist Party and by the success of the 1933-founded Flemish nationalist VNV, which obtained about 8 percent of the seats (DeWever 1992). As table 5.1 clearly shows, such a result for parties other than the three traditional ones (Liberals, Catholics, Socialists) was unprecedented. The partial election of the Senate two weeks later was only slightly less worrisome, but in general it confirmed the political success of the newly created Rex and VNV.

In the months following the elections, the rise of Rex seemed unstoppable. The rise to power of the *Front Populaire* in France at the beginning of June gave an additional formidable propaganda weapon to Degrelle, who until then had hardly mentioned the Communist threat in his speeches. In the autumn, thanks also to the diffuse discontent in some strata of the population for some Communist-led strikes, Rex reached probably its highest point of popularity.

Even France's treaty with Russia (signed by the French bourgeois government in 1935) became an argument for Rexist propaganda.

The political distancing from the France of the Popular Front was not an operation exclusively of international importance, it had domestic implications as well. One of the weak points of the Rexist Party was, in fact, its lack of electoral breakthrough in Flanders. While in Wallonie and in the Brussels region the party had obtained more than 15% of the vote, in Flanders his following had only reached about 7%, and even that was obtained mostly thanks to the support of the French-speaking upper bourgeoisie of that region—the so-called Fransquillions (de Smet and Evalenko 1956; de Smet, Evalenko, and Fraeys 1958). In October 1936 Degrelle concluded an agreement with Staf de Clercq, leader of the VNV, on the basis of a common program to achieve a corporatist state with large territorial autonomy for Flanders (Callender 1937). While this agreement would be broken by the VNV after less than a year, until the spring of 1937 (Rex's high point) it appeared to be a further factor strengthening the extremist challenge to Belgian democracy, one that rendered it all the more difficult for the Flemish wing of the Catholic Party to reabsorb the VNV, mainly composed of Catholics.

After such electoral success, Rex's propaganda grew even more intense and aggressive in tone. Degrelle held many highly successful public meetings through 1936 and the beginning of 1937 (e.g., Jamin 1937). In January 1937 he managed to fill the largest meeting hall in Brussels with twelve to fifteen thousand people six nights in a row. These continuous public performances of Degrelle and the other Rexist leaders in nonelectoral times responded to a precise political strategy: Degrelle's plan was to achieve a plebiscitary consensus that would bring him to power, a sort of popular wave behind him that would make it seem like a foregone conclusion that Rex would win, as its main political slogan proclaimed ("*Rex vaincra,*" or "Rex shall win"), and ultimately induce King Leopold III and other sectors of the establishment to back him in his run for power. To this end, Degrelle repeatedly tried to force a direct confrontation with the traditional parties, a test of his strength against the *ancien régime.* His strategy culminated in the organization of a "March on Brussels" and the forced by-election of April 1937, both of which, however, failed thanks to the prompt reaction of the incumbents. The latter episode was particularly important: Degrelle, who was not an MP, provoked the resignation of one of the Rexist MPs elected in Brussels and ran in the by-election to replace him. A success would have substantiated Degrelle's claims that

the people supported his fight against the old party regime. Further strategically provoked by-elections would have followed until the popular consensus emerging from such elections would have forced the king to call a general election, in which Rex would have given the final blow to the regime. Degrelle was not successful, though: the majority and the government took up the challenge, and Prime Minister van Zeeland, supported by the whole majority (except the internal right wing of the Catholic Party) and also by the Communists, badly defeated Degrelle. This episode definitively changed the expectations about Rex's potential and shattered Degrelle's prestige, marking the start of the party's decline.

The Decline of Rex (April 1937–April 1939)

The effects of the defeat of April 1937 on Rex were devastating: the "rotten" regime that Rex wanted to destroy actually struck back victoriously, putting strong doubts on Rex's actual perspectives in the minds of many (Étienne 1968, 151). In 1937 the movement was struck by a wave of resignations: important figures (the president of its parliamentary group, some provincial leaders, the leader of the "*Gardes Rexistes,*" the Rexist Guards) resigned from their positions, and some left the party altogether (de Grunne 1938). The VNV suspended—in June—and then entirely cancelled—in September—its political agreement with Rex. Increasing disagreement on Flemish matters between the two territorial sectors of the party, Rex-Wallonie and Rex-Vlaanderen then started—these would come to a head at the beginning of 1939 on the occasion of the "affaire Martens," which led to a further wave of resignations and expulsions among the Rex-Vlaanderen cadres (Étienne 1968).[4]

After the April 1937 defeat, Rex went on with its denunciations of scandals and the corruption of the politicians of the traditional parties. In October of that year, even Prime Minister van Zeeland fell victim to one of these denunciations, as the party accused him of having received undue payments from the Central Bank (of which he had been vice-governor before 1935) after the end of his tenure there. The scandal led to van Zeeland's resignation but it was not enough to revitalize Rex.[5] In the local elections of October 1938, the vote for Rex declined substantially, to about 6% in the councils with more than 10,000 inhabitants and in the constituency towns (Carpinelli 1981). The 1939 general elections confirmed this tendency: the Rex vote declined to 4.4%. On the eve of these elections, eight Rexist MPs and three senators resigned from the party; by

this stage, "the movement was dying. In fact, it was reduced to a group of sympathizers and of militants gathered in the publication of a newspaper, *Pays Réel*" (Wallef 1980, 518-19). By contrast, in the same election the other two extremist parties, the Communists and the VNV, maintained their 1936 results. Rex's decline after 1939 made it impossible for it to constitute a real challenge to the system. It would only come back onto the Belgian political scene after the German occupation, an occurrence that obviously indicates nothing about the ability of the extremist antidemocratic party to effect change in a democratic context (e.g., Conway 1986 and 1993; Warmbrunn 1995).[6]

The Defense

Rex is sometimes described as a "weak" challenge to Belgian democracy that had always been doomed to fail (Stengers 1965; Conway 1994). Various arguments are given in support of this interpretation: from the strategic inadequacies of Rex to the "unfavorable conditions" in which Rex operated, such as the absence of a strong right-wing tradition in the Belgian political culture, to the fact that Rex was not backed by powerful organized groups. While there may be a grain of truth to all of these arguments, they greatly underestimate the role of institutional reactions in Rex's defeat. Such reactions, although they were not as visible as in Czechoslovakia and Finland, played an important role in thwarting the Rexist threat. Moreover, the response to the crisis of the Belgian Catholic Party appears to have been crucial, as it allowed the persistence of a stable democratic coalition that could devise an adequate strategy of defense by counteracting the tendency for defection that Degrelle wanted to provoke with his tactics. Below I analyze the internal dynamics of the Catholic Party first, and then the strategies of the king and the government.

The Reaction of the Catholic Party

The emergence and increasing political importance of Rex in 1934–35 came at a time of internal reform for the Catholic Party, during which it tried to consolidate the organization and strengthen party discipline, as well as restore the ability of the party to make new inroads. What was called the Catholic Party was actually an umbrella organization whose official name was, after 1921, *Union Catholique Belge*. This included four member organizations: the *Fédération des Associations et des Cercles Catholiques* (Federation of Catholic Associations and Circles), which represented the Catholic aristocracy and

bourgeoisie; the *Fédération Nationale des Classes Moyennes* (National Federation of the Middle Classes); after 1930, the *Alliance Agricole* (Land Alliance); and the *Ligue Nationale des Travailleurs Chrétiens* (Christian Labor League), a Catholic workers' movement (e.g., Simon 1964; Soete, De Smaele, and Dujardin 1995; Conway 1990a and b).[7] The process of internal reform, the full details of which space does not permit, was mainly a process of centralization aimed at creating and reinforcing the central organs the party, limiting the independence of the various component parts, tightening internal discipline, and, to a limited extent, allowing individual membership of the party without going through the member organizations (Gérard 1985). One of the driving forces behind this complex process of reform was Hubert Pierlot, who was elected president of the Catholic Union in 1935. Pierlot and the sectors of the party supporting him were the main forces that kept the party clear from Rex and its influence and counteracted the attempts of the traditionalist wing to drag the party to the right.[8]

Although some voices in the party and its constituting organizations advocated abandoning the coalition with the Socialists and creating a wider right-wing front that would include Rex, the majority of the party managed to keep its center-based alliance with the Socialists and the Liberals, therefore allowing the government to undertake a strategy of defense against Rex. The right wing of the party was therefore in a minority within the party, but its leaders tried repeatedly to move the entire party, or at any rate its internal majority, to their position. If this project had succeeded, the challenge of Rex in the turbulent years of 1936–37 would have been much more dangerous for Belgian democracy than it ever became. In other words, if Rex could be defeated in so short a time, this was largely because of the nondefection of the Catholics and the successful reactions by the majority of the party, under the new tenure of Pierlot, to the attempts, supported by a significant internal minority, to insert the Catholic Party in a right-wing coalition.

The development of the internal struggle within the Catholic Party on whether to stick to a center-based alliance or to defect to the right following the centrifugal drive triggered in the party system by Rex's actual and expected successes is marked by the many dramatic events of those convulsive years for Belgian politics. In particular, the split between Rex and the Catholic Party in February 1936, Rex's electoral success of May of the same year, and Degrelle's defeat in the by-election of April 1937 are particularly important in this respect. Each of these events led to a new phase of the struggle, in each of which

different problems and opportunities presented themselves to the actors in the game, namely, Rex, the Catholic leadership, and, most importantly in this context, the traditionalist, "defectionist" wing of the Catholic Party.

Before November 1935, although reluctant to act anything but autonomously, Degrelle had repeatedly declared that, despite his criticisms of the old leaders, he was willing to stay within the Catholic Party: for example, a public declaration made in June 1935 contains this very statement explicitly. In November 1935, the episode known as the "*coup de Cortrai*" took place, in which Degrelle publicly attacked the traditional Catholic political leaders, explicitly posing to the leadership of the Catholic Party the problem of what strategy to take vis-à-vis a political grouping that had finally spiraled out of control.[9] After that date there was no hope of a "silent adjustment," although Rex did not yet officially declare his exit from the party. The official reaction of the Executive Board of the Catholic Union came just four days after the episode: the Board clarified in an official document that Rex and Degrelle were not part of the Catholic Party. Other, similar reactions of condemnation against Rex from the Catholic establishment quickly followed: for example, the Christian Labor League decided a few days later that membership of Rex was incompatible with membership in the League. The Belgian Church also took action: on 20 November 1935 the Belgian bishops, while not condemning Rex in clear and explicit terms, issued a decree in which they forbade priests from contributing to Rexist publications or letting such publication be sold in front of churches; they also urged the heads of Catholic educational institutions to keep their pupils from getting involved in the unrest provoked by Rex. The official motivation given was that Rex had become a "merely political" movement operating in complete independence from the Catholic Party (Gérard 1985, 434).

Even after Cortrai, Degrelle seemed to consider remaining within the Catholic Party, on condition that the existing leading class—*les pourris* (the corrupt), as he called them in his speeches—be swept away. And in early 1936 Degrelle actually launched extremely aggressive—and, it is worth stressing, very successful—campaigns against several traditional leaders of the Catholic Party. He first accused Paul Segers of corruption, which provoked his resignation from the presidency of the *Fédération des Cercles*. Segers sued him, but the courts ruled against the plaintiff, increasing Degrelle's prestige and credibility in the eyes of the public. In the following weeks Degrelle virulently attacked the whole leadership of the Catholic Party, proclaiming his intention of removing

them from political life. At the same time, though, the Rexists negotiated for places on the Catholic electoral lists in some provinces, even putting forward a Rexist candidate to replace a former prime minister. The Catholic Party, of course, did not accept these requests, insisting on the contrary on the enforcement of stricter rules of internal discipline, which led to the definitive break of 23 February 1936, when Degrelle officially announced that Rex would take part in the election with its own lists.

At the same time, Degrelle and other Rexist leaders like José Streel and Jean Denis announced that Rex rejected all existing parties, which should make way for a massive "*rassemblement des honnêtes*" that would supersede them. According to them, the Catholic Party in particular no longer had any reason to exist. At this stage, the Catholic Union gave up any hope of trying to coexist with Rex and devised a coordinated response. On 26 February the Executive Board of the Union decided to stop any electoral negotiations with Rex and Rexist groups and ruled that even external cooperation with the Rexist movement was incompatible with membership of the Catholic Party. The Board gave four reasons for its decision: first of all, Rex was presenting itself as an explicit enemy of the Catholic Party. Second, its real goal was the destruction of the Party and of democratic institutions and the establishment of a dictatorship. Third, Rexist methods were in direct contradiction with the Catholic principles of justice and charity. Lastly, Rex had become irrelevant because the reasons that had once prompted its emergence had been eliminated in to the Party's internal reforms. Within the Board there were dissenting voices against this radical decision: some traditionalist leaders, such as Paul Crokaert, openly opposed it, but the line that the Party should cut itself off from Rex prevailed (Gérard 1985, 436).

This decision marked the beginning of a new phase in the political interactions at the right end of the Belgian political spectrum. First of all, the Catholic Party accelerated the process of internal reform and centralization, especially by exerting stricter control over the formation of the lists (with mixed success) and appointing a committee to screen the candidates that clashed with local and sectional interests within the party, traditionally powerful in this respect. More important, particularly for the public image of the party, new internal rules concerning the incompatibility of political and financial or industrial positions were approved—as mentioned, the accumulation of offices in politics and business and finance was one of the main themes of the Rexist campaigns. These rules had a few exceptions in their application, but

they aimed at least to limit collusion in the strictest sense, that is, the achievement of a powerful position in business or finance on the basis of one's political influence.[10]

After the split, the Catholic Party also concentrated on fighting Rex on its own terrain by adopting new propaganda and campaign strategies. In this area, the Party took its lead from the (correct) observation that Rex mainly appealed to younger generation of Catholics who had once found their home in the ACJB (Conway 1994). Thus, Pierlot and the leadership of the Union concentrated on targeting that group, in several ways involving former members of the ACJB in the campaign. In December 1935, the *Front Catholique des Jeunes* (Catholic Youth Front) was formed, through a merger of smaller right-wing Catholic groups. The newspaper *L'Esprit Nouveau* became the house organ of this new group. An earlier version of this project was to include Rex before the split, but negotiations with Degrelle on this matter fell through. Now, Pierlot managed to turn this group against Rex—even though its political tendencies were not so distant from those of Rex—and in favor of the Catholic Party, for which *L'Esprit Nouveau* campaigned actively during the elections of 1936.

Pierlot pursued a similar strategy with regard to a restricted group of former ACJB cadres, especially young lawyers, persuading them to run against Degrelle and support the Catholic Party in the campaign and thereby contribute to changing the image of the Party while appealing to young right-wing Catholics, the group most susceptible to the Rexist rhetoric. This group held three official meetings between January and April 1936 in which the participants drafted a plan to hold public conferences where they would speak in favor of the *Front Catholique des Jeunes.* Although also these young former ACJB cadres were ideologically close to the Rexists, and indeed shared many of their ideas—primarily the contempt for the *politique politicienne* of the old parties, including the Catholic Party—Pierlot managed to obtain their support for the Catholic Party mainly on the basis of their personal loyalty to the ex-director of the ACJB, Giovanni Hoyois, who strongly supported the efforts of Pierlot in the campaign against Rex (Gérard 1985, 449–51). Finally, in April 1936 the ACJB declared that its membership was incompatible with that of Rex.[11]

The efforts of Pierlot and his supporters were not enough to avoid electoral defeat in the elections of May 1936, although they very likely did contain it. Once Rex had obtained significant parliamentary representation, the political

game changed again: in the year following the elections, the final clash between the Rexists and the democratic establishment took place. In this phase, in fact, Rex deployed the maximum centrifugal effect both on the party system and within the Catholic Party, in which a strong tendency emerged to use Rex and its increasing political success to change the political center of gravity of the government coalition. This political project, pursued by the traditional wing of the party and involving political cooperation with Rex, was not the only project of political reaggregation going on in the political landscape in those years—the state of flux of the party system had encouraged several—but it was probably the most realistic and at the same time the most dangerous one for Belgian democracy. The defeat of this project and, despite many difficulties, the stability of the coalition supporting the government, were the determinant factors in stopping Rex's political breakthrough.

After the elections, a new government had to be formed, which required consultations and political negotiations. Pierlot's line was again to strengthen the unity of the party's direction: the Executive Board of the Catholic Union, headed by Pierlot, met on the very day on which the king started consultations—before the various Catholic "member organizations" could do the same—and appointed a restricted committee of nine members to follow closely the evolution of the coalition-forming process. The board decided that the committee—which obviously included Pierlot and tried to achieve a balance between the various tendencies represented in the member organizations of the Party—had to follow a univocal set of strategic guidelines in the consultations with the king and the negotiations with other parties, which would constitute the official line of the Catholic Party, a decision that was not communicated to the press. The guidelines were that the Party should avoid the calling of new elections, which would simply reinforce Rex, and support a reappointment of the incumbent Prime Minister van Zeeland in order to avoid the formation of a cabinet led by the Socialist leader Emile Vandervelde. At the same time, the Party should appear to be resisting the right-wing drive that Rex was imposing on the political debate about traditional Catholic themes, in order to facilitate the agreement with the Socialists and the Liberals in support of a three-party cabinet (Gérard 1985, 459). Pierlot's attempts to centralize the direction of the party, despite the delicate phase of crisis, were openly challenged by the Catholic member organizations, especially the *Fédération Nationale des Classes Moyennes* and the more traditionalist *Fédération des Associations et des Cercles Catholiques,* but in the end Pierlot's line prevailed.

As the Socialists had emerged as the largest party from the elections, the choice of King Leopold III for the post of Prime Minister fell on Vandervelde, but this polarized the situation even more: in fact, the Socialist leader left the Conservative wing of the Catholics—led by Charles d'Aspremont Lynden, among others—out of his rounds of consultations. Thus, d'Aspremont declared in an interview with *Libre Belgique* not to believe in the chances of a democratically minded government that would oppose the Fascist threat: if such a coalition were about to be formed, he would vote against it (Gérard 1985, 460).

The line set by Pierlot eventually succeeded: Vandervelde failed and van Zeeland, who increasingly presented himself as a "man above parties," was appointed prime minister, but his new cabinet would lean towards the left, frustrating the traditionalist wing of the Catholic Party. In fact, the Socialists had a dominant position in the cabinet and managed to veto the appointment of d'Aspremont as a minister. The Catholic right wing would have to be satisfied with the appointment of Pierlot himself as minister of agriculture, but obviously this was hardly enough. This encouraged the traditionalist wing of the Catholics in the pursuit of an alternative political project, one that in their intentions would leave them with a bigger share of power.

Van Zeeland and his majority had to confront the biggest national political tensions since World War I. Extremist political plans were generally fueled by the major strikes occurring at the time, which had halted production in several important industrial sites of the country. Although not having political-extremist goals, these strikes were easily associated with the big strike movement in France in the same period and the formation of a Popular Front there. This gave them a political color that could be exploited by antisystem parties of both sides. The van Zeeland cabinet addressed the strike problem first and managed to solve it rapidly: the government called a National Labor Conference in which employers and workers were represented; the two sides agreed on some fundamental economic reforms, such as the paid vacation and the forty-hour workweek for enterprises involving dangerous or unhealthy work, which were then approved in Parliament.

In the clash between the projects for the reaggregation of the Belgian party system, two tendencies in particular emerged: one to form a Popular Front and one to form a broad right-wing alliance. While there was little possibility that the former would ever happen, despite the French example,[12] the latter was rather more likely, and there were several attempts in this direction pushed by

the right wing of the Catholic Party. Purporting to "have learned the lesson of the Spanish Civil War," this political faction was decidedly against van Zeeland and in favor of a different majority, one based on the alliance of all anti-Socialist forces, for which the inclusion of Rex and the VNV would have been essential politically even more than numerically. The Catholic traditionalist leaders Gustave Sap and d'Aspremont were very active in supporting this political strategy, which had the potential to endanger seriously the persistence of Belgian democracy against the challenge coming from the extreme right. The parliamentary faction around these leaders was not large—only five Catholic MPs voted against van Zeeland in the vote of confidence for his new cabinet, and a further handful, including Sap, abstained—but their influence reached beyond their parliamentary allies. Sap was the director of *De Standaard,* an important daily newspaper that supported this political strategy of the Catholic right wing, while d'Aspremont was the president of the *Fédération des Cercles,* traditionally the most influential of the Catholic associations. (It should be noted that D'Aspremont had been elected to that position in order to fight Rex on its own political territory, after the crisis that had led to the resignation of Segers after he had been attacked by Degrelle.)

Sap and d'Aspremont cooperated constantly, using their personal and political influence to foster their political project. Their strategy was based on a very specific calculation. Knowing that they did not have the majority of Catholics behind them, they thought (realistically) that, if the fragile equilibrium on which the van Zeeland cabinet rested could be upset, then it would be much easier to rally support among the Catholic rank and file for their political project of a "*bloc d'ordre.*" Thus, although they also made informal contacts with other bourgeois politicians trying to win their support and appealed to the general public through public speeches and the columns of *De Standaard,* they took specific steps to cause the fall of van Zeeland.[13] Both Sap and d'Aspremont were actively involved in the plans leading to the Rexist mass demonstration in Brussels in October 1936—the March on Brussels—and to the forced by-election of April 1937 (Gérard 1985, 467). *De Standaard,* which profited from material assistance from Nazi Germany, published very sympathetic articles in support of the March on Brussels.[14] When it was decided that in the by-election April 1937 the prime minister was to oppose Degrelle personally, Sap presented a formal question to the Government in March accusing van Zeeland of corruption (text in Étienne 1968), an intervention that was intended to "prepare the terrain" for the election in order to favor Degrelle.[15]

These initiatives of the Catholic right-wing leaders came in a period in which both sides, Rex and the government, were very actively pursuing their own political projects. Degrelle, consistently successful in his public appearances, was also active on the Flemish side, where he concluded a formal agreement with the VNV, which, although it was meant to remain secret, came to the attention of the press at the beginning of October 1936, which caused great political unrest (Étienne 1968). In the same weeks, the van Zeeland government, for its part, was also very active in reacting with determination against Rex's propaganda. As mentioned above, both the March on Brussels of 25 October 1936 and the partial election of 11 April 1937 were intended to show that the majority supporting the government did not have genuine support among the electorate, which if true would have greatly increased the chances of success for the political realignment desired by the traditionalist Catholic wing. Despite the situation of political disorder and uncertainty, both initiatives failed, and with them any hopes for the formation of a *bloc d'ordre* by the Catholic traditionalists, which made the plans for takeover by Rex very unrealistic at that stage. The main reason for this was that, under the guidance of Pierlot and his determined strategic leadership—supported, as shown in the next sections, by the majority of the establishment—the Catholic Party did not dissolve, despite the difficult political circumstances and the centrifugal forces acting on it—keep in mind the threat represented by the VNV in Flanders—nor did it follow the adventurous projects of political realignment on the extreme right, despite the fact that those were actively supported by influential figures within the party. This gave the government the necessary stability to react to Rex and thwart its takeover attempts.[16]

In the immediate aftermath of the by-election of April 1937, having seen his plans in support of Degrelle founder, d'Aspremont made a last attempt to make Rex a major player in the political game, this time by trying to include it in the Catholic Party. There is no way of knowing what exact form this would have taken, whether as an electoral alliance or the inclusion of Rex in the Catholic Party as an autonomous group. Whatever the form, D'Aspremont's goal was to reinforce the internal right wing of the party in order to have more political weight within the party to continue to foster his political plans. For his part, Degrelle was ready to go along with this plan, since he saw the very existence of his party threatened by the recent electoral defeat. After van Zeeland's victory and the progressive internal reforms of the party organization drafted by Pierlot and his collaborators, this project could not find an

audience directly within the party. So d'Aspremont looked to the Catholic Church, and in particular to Cardinal Jozef-Ernest van Roey, for support, to counteract his recent condemnation of Rex. To this aim, Degrelle wrote to van Roey, declaring himself ready to eliminate everything in Rex that was against Church doctrine. D'Aspremont gave the letter personally to the Cardinal, who accepted the intermediation and replied that Degrelle should await an answer. However, the Catholic forces opposing an alliance with Rex were again rapidly set in motion, and the Cardinal was pressured not to accept Degrelle's offer. So van Roey went back on his promise and gave no answer, even after d'Aspremont made a further respectful attempt to obtain an answer and Degrelle wrote a somewhat pathetic letter (excerpts in Gérard 1985, 482). The failure of this last, desperate attempt marked the final crisis of Rex. In June 1937 the agreement with the VNV was denounced by Staf De Clercq. In due course, D'Aspremont and Sap were appointed to ministerial posts and they parted ways with Degrelle, who ended up completely isolated.

The Interventions of the Head of State

As explained in chapter 1, defense against a strong antisystem party is possible only if the border party or parties resist the centrifugal drive introduced to the party system by the extremists' relational anti-systemness. We have seen how the efforts in this direction by the internal majority of the Catholic Party were successful. To the same outcome contributed the interventions of the head of state, King Leopold III, during the crisis. Leopold III, in fact, played a crucial role in the successful response of the democratic forces to Rex's challenge. This was in particular thanks to the active and influential role that he played—despite being still a young king and without the immense prestige of his father Albert I—in the process of coalition formation. In this, Leopold interpreted his role as king in quite an assertive way, resolving the deadlocks that could have destabilized the government and provided dangerous fodder for the Rexist propaganda.[17] Some authors underline the fact that the king had more freedom to act and a greater possibility to exert direct political influence after 1936 precisely because of the defeat of the traditional parties, which would normally fully dominate the electoral and parliamentary process (e.g., Witte and Craeybeckx 1987). But this in no way undercuts the observation that he used this opportunity both actively and in such a way as to channel the evolution of the political equilibrium towards democratic solutions.

The importance of the king's intervention in the coalition-forming process

must be seen against the background of the difficulties in this process as a result of the internal fragmentation of the three traditional parties. The Catholic, Socialist, and Liberal parties all featured a very high degree of internal fragmentation with strong and independent internal factions (e.g., Hislaire 1945; Dhondt 1962; Balthazar 1981). This situation could not but have an impact on the allocation of portfolios, in which a difficult balance was generally struck between the internal factions of each of the coalition parties: the Flemish and the Walloon internal wings, the members of the Chamber and those of the Senate, progressive and conservative groups, and generational divides, each variously overlapping with each other—in some cases it was even necessary for the cabinet to include among its ministers an MP elected in each of the main cities (Höjer 1946).

Finding an equilibrium in this complex situation was generally very difficult, and this was at the root of the governmental instability during the whole interwar period. The victory of Rex in 1936 rendered the task of forming a government even more complicated, and the risk of a deadlock and a consequent power vacuum was palpable. In fact, the Catholics had suffered the most from the victory of Rex, but at the same time they were necessary to any coalition excluding Rex, the VNV, and the Communists—but then so were the Socialists: a Catholic-Liberal coalition, typical in the years before 1935, did not have a majority in Parliament. Excluding a still politically unviable Catholic-Socialist coalition, the only possibility was to form a government supported by all three traditional parties, like the one that had supported van Zeeland before the elections. After May 1936, however, a pure and simple replication of that political formula was more difficult, since the Socialists, now the biggest party in Parliament, could claim the position of prime minister.

In such a situation, with large strikes ongoing and announced in several cities and with the right-wing extremist tide rising in the country, appointing a democratic government that would be able to use all available powers without being crippled by opposing vetoes and blackmail, was vital. The king's intervention and management of the crisis were decisive in achieving this objective. Van Zeeland resigned on the day of the elections—he had wanted to do so in March, but the king convinced him to remain in office at least until the elections—and the king opened consultations with the parties, including Rex, the VNV, and the Communists. The king favored a government of national unity, but he was not sure that the Catholics and the Liberals would accept a Socialist prime minister. Thus, he first appointed van Zeeland, who refused for

family reasons. Then he appointed the Socialist leader Vandervelde as *informateur,* that is, he was tasked with inquiring of the representatives of the main parties whether there was a realistic possibility of a three-party government under a Socialist prime minister. After this phase, the king appointed Vandervelde himself as prime minister, but his attempt to form a government failed (8 June), mainly due to the opposition of many Catholics—but not of the internal left wing—and of the Liberals to a Socialist leadership of the coalition, especially after the last congress of the Socialist Party had expressed a stronger emphasis on social reforms, cultural autonomy of the Flanders, and other radical positions.

After the failure of Vandervelde, the Socialists supported the candidacy of van Zeeland to lead a tripartite coalition, since they thought that they would have a greater say in that coalition than in others; they also wanted to stabilize a political situation that might have evolved dangerously.[18] Thus, van Zeeland, formally also the candidate of the other two parties, was immediately appointed by the king to form a government, but the negotiations again stalled at the composition of the cabinet. Three days later (11 June) van Zeeland went back to the king to resign. At that stage, the country had been without a government for about a month. So the king intervened and solved the impasse: he called a meeting the same day with the most influential politicians within each tendency in the traditional parties—Vandervelde and Paul-Henri Spaak for the Socialists; Philip van Isacker, an important figure of the progressive wing, and Pierlot for the Catholics; Adolphe Max and Jean Denis for the Liberals—and urged them to find a solution to fill the governmental vacuum. After this meeting, van Zeeland agreed to conduct a second round of consultations, which this time developed mainly outside the parliamentary groups, after two more days of which (13 June) he was able to form his government.[19] It is certainly reasonable to think that, had Leopold III not intervened and let the stalemate drag on, Rex's chances would have improved and, more importantly, the plans of those within the establishment who wanted to shift to a different political equilibrium would also have been enhanced.

The Executive and the Defensive Measures

The main task for the Belgian democratic forces in these difficult conditions was therefore to build a governmental coalition stable enough to react to the challenges coming from the extreme right. This was possible thanks to the rejection of Rex by the majority of the Catholic Party's leadership and to the

positive outcome of the coalition negotiations after the 1936 elections, largely induced by the king's intervention, as described above. Once constituted, the government reacted mainly through the use of widespread and forceful political propaganda against Rex and its subversive plans and in favor of the existing political equilibrium, as well as with ad hoc provisions in response to the specific actions that Rex undertook to attack the regime. Although in 1937 some legal restrictions on public demonstrations were introduced, the role of special anti-extremist legislation in Belgium—unlike in Czechoslovakia and Finland—remained limited with respect to action against Rex. Table 5.2 summarizes the strategies of defense enacted.

The first reaction of the government to the emergence of Rex and its first successes was to move forward to 24 May 1936 the parliamentary elections, which had initially been scheduled for the autumn, with the aim of avoiding the consolidation of the emerging party. The decision-making process leading to this outcome reveals its intended goal very clearly: at the end of 1935 the first van Zeeland government (supported, like his second one, by a tripartite coalition) wanted to hold the new elections in October 1936. The reason for this timing was to avoid the possibility that the "special powers" conferred on the government in order to confront the economic recession would become an issue in the electoral campaign, since by the time of the elections they would have expired. The Socialists opposed this decision, so the government proposed, at the beginning of March, to bring forward the elections to 21 June. Parliament approved. A few weeks later, however, faced with the increasing aggressiveness and dynamism of Rex, the government dissolved Parliament and called new elections for 24 May. In the same period, the Catholic Party started elaborating a strategy of reaction to Rex.

Probably the most visible strategy of reaction adopted by the democratic incumbent in Belgium was a form of incorporation—that is, appeals to the public in favor of the democratic system. This was particularly important in the case of Rex, for which political propaganda was such a particular strength. And once van Zeeland's new second cabinet had confronted and resolved the problem of the general strikes throughout the country, they moved decisively against Rex and the VNV on the propaganda front. A systematic program of public meetings was set up in which van Zeeland himself as well as several ministers addressed large audiences warning that Rex represented a danger for Belgian democracy, with the explicit goal of "étouffer le serpent dans l'oeuf" (Höjer 1946). Even the king expressed the same opinion, albeit indirectly.[20] In

Table 5.2 Defensive Measures against Rex, 1936–1939

Defensive Measure	Status
Ban	Not used. No special legislation allowing it.
Explicit electoral barriers	Not used.
Electoral thresholds and biases	Law of March 1937 prohibiting "deliberate" by-elections. No other reform of the electoral law. The existing (mild) bias disfavors Rex in the 1939 elections.
Special legislation	Existing in some areas, but not always implemented.
On institutional core	No new law passed in those years. King has special powers, which he used in 1932. Those were reinforced in 1934 but were not used against Rex.
On public order	Laws in 1936 complement restrictions already existing in special legislation passed in 1934.
On propaganda	Some protection for MPs existed after 1934 but not strictly implemented. Government sues *Le Pays Réel* for undermining institutions on the basis of the existing legislation.
Other laws and administrative provisions	Elections of 1936 moved forward in order to avoid consolidation of Rex. Rexist "March on Brussels" prohibited in October 1936.
Access to state radio	Denied to Degrelle in 1936
Secret police repression	Data not available.
"Public" police repression	Moderate. Some cases of house search of Rexist members.
Appeals to public opinion	Large use by: the king, the prime minister, some cabinet members; the government summons the Archbishop of Malines to clarify his position of condemnation against Rex.
Policy concessions	No
Negotiations	No
Creation of alternative organizations	Part of the electoral strategy of the Catholic Party in 1936.

his public appearances and radio interventions, van Zeeland not only spoke against the extremists, but also repeatedly called for national collaboration between the three traditional parties "to preserve freedom," making clear reference to the existing political projects intended to shift the general political equilibrium towards the right. The value and the importance of democratic political institutions was also a primary theme of most interventions by democratic leaders (e.g., Étienne 1968; Gérard 1985, 465).

A further line of government action was to enact specific provisions counteracting, one by one, all of the political moves by Rex that constituted a danger for the system. As mentioned above, in mid-October 1936 Degrelle announced a mass demonstration in Brussels, which would gather 250,000 Rexists from all over the country. "It seems that on the announcement of this 'March on Brussels,' the parties and the government believed that a Rexist coup d'état was imminent. A wind of panic seems to have blown on the governmental *milieux*" (Étienne 1968, 119).[21] In fact, the announcement of this political move by Degrelle came after a period in which the popularity of the Rexist leader and his party was increasing at an impressive pace. Apart from the long series of his very successful public meetings, the popularity of the Rexist leader was enhanced by other events: in September 1936, Degrelle was victim of a failed murder attempt, and at the beginning of October the conclusion of his secret agreement with the VNV leaked in the national press. Yet on 22 October, only three days before the scheduled date of the march, the government prohibited the demonstrators from meeting on public soil—which meant that they would have to gather on private property! The following day, Degrelle challenged the government, saying that he would not respect the prohibition, but at the same time he changed the declared purpose of the demonstration from "*la defense de la liberté*" to a military celebration of a World War I battle of which 25 October was the anniversary and for which public ceremonies were already scheduled. Only three to five thousand Rexists turned out on the scheduled day, and the demonstration was a total failure. Degrelle addressed his militants from an improvised stage, but the police dispersed the crowd even arresting a few in attendance; the Rexist leader himself was also taken to a police station after some brawling (Étienne 1968, 120).

After this episode, the government continued with its pin-prick tactics. For example, it refused Degrelle access to state radio, even though all parties had the right to a certain amount of air time. The government took this decision administratively; no legal basis existed for it.[22] One of the participants in the

Rexist demonstration, Colonel Vigneron, was stripped of his rank in December 1936—as this was an unusual occurrence for a reserve officer, it made a strong impression in military circles. Van Zeeland's minister of justice (Bovesse, a Liberal) also intervened repeatedly against Rex, wherever his powers permitted: immediately after Degrelle announced his mass demonstration in Brussels, the minister ordered the General Prosecutor to speed up all trials involving Rexists, of which there were many, for various reasons. At the beginning of December 1936, he ordered a wave of arrests directed at the journalists of *Le Pays Réel,* the official organ of Rex, although after a while these were released, because of the absence of any legal basis for such arrests. Some time later, however, three journalists were sentenced to two months in prison on the rather feeble pretext of having attacked the credibility of the state (Étienne 1968, 130). House searches against Rexist militants were ordered in order to find illegally owned weapons.

The prompt reaction of the government and the majority to the by-election challenge of April 1937 is perfectly in line with the general pattern of action (by Rex) and immediate reaction (by the government). In order to call the by-election, Degrelle procured the resignation of one of his Brussels MPs and campaigned personally. (With the contempt for Parliament typical of many Fascist leaders of this period, he had not run in the 1936 elections.) His aim—for which he had the support of the internal right wing of the Catholic Party—was to obtain a plebiscite, in which he would defeat all the other parties in a direct challenge, thereby continuing the escalation of his party that had been only briefly interrupted by the setback of the failed demonstration in October 1936. In January 1937 Degrelle had had massive success in public speeches in Brussels and was keen to obtain what would have been an important further victory. The resignation of the Rexist MP was decided at the beginning of March 1937. Prompted by the example of the large role the electoral landslides in the frequent elections in the years 1930–33 had played in the rise to power of Hitler in Germany, Degrelle's strategy was to run in this by-election and be elected, resign, run again, resign again, until the consensus for Rex would render the calling of general elections necessary (Étienne 1968, 133).

At first, the government was taken by surprise. Some of its members wanted to forbid the by-election, but this was impossible, particularly given the "*précédent Spaak,*" in which the same tactics had been used by the Socialists the years before.[23] However, the challenge was taken up promptly. The response of the government was twofold: first, a law was passed forbidding future "deliberate"

by-elections—that is, those deriving from the voluntary resignation of an MP. Second, on the basis of a proposal coming from the Socialists, it was decided that the Prime Minister van Zeeland, who was also not an MP, would run against Degrelle. The prime minister would not run for any specific party, but rather for the democratic regime as such, and would be supported by all three traditional parties, which would not put up any other candidates (Höjer 1946, 258). This solution received the backing of the Communist Party, which also did not field candidates. The leaders of the traditionalist wing of the Catholic Party advised abstention, and Degrelle was explicitly supported by Rex and the VNV only.

Once the two opposing fronts were defined in the way just described, the "numerical" defeat of Degrelle was assured. Symbolically, though, it would still be useful to Rex if the electoral result were to show that the two parties supporting Degrelle, Rex and VNV, had increased their electoral support in comparison to the general elections of the previous year. So the electoral campaign was lively and tense: Degrelle was defiant in the face of all democratic leaders, van Zeeland and the parties supporting him used overwhelming resources, and the final result was 76% in favor of van Zeeland, 19% in favor of Degrelle, and about 5% empty or invalid ballots (Étienne 1968). Degrelle had thus obtained fewer votes than Rex and VNV combined in the previous elections in that district, a setback from which he would never recover.[24] In all likelihood, this was the key battle the government won against Rex, since it certainly changed the growing perception in the public that Rex's march was unstoppable, and it showed the capability of reaction of the established parties, despite all their divisions.

Stronger "militancy" strategies than the ones mentioned above were not used against Rex. In particular, Belgium had a rather "mild" apparatus of special anti-extremist legislation, especially if one compares it to the laws passed in Czechoslovakia and Finland in the same period. In Belgium, pieces of anti-extremist legislation were passed in two waves: the first in 1933–34, and the second in 1936–37.[25] The first series of acts covered attacks against the external security of the state, setting some limits to political propaganda—protection of MPs from defamation and of the military from attacks in extremist propaganda—and on private militias. The latter aspect was addressed by the law of 29 July 1934, which was directed specifically against the formation of private armies by political parties. It did not prohibit the wearing of uniforms and badges and other symbols by members of political parties,

and in fact no such law was ever enacted. Rex could therefore "legally" display its revolutionary symbolism without incurring any sanctions (Loewenstein 1938b, 727).

Although the law on private armies was directed against the extreme right-wing groups *Légion Nationale* and *Verdinaso* (*Verbond der Dietschen Nationaal Solidaristen,* or League of All-Dutch National Solidarists), which were active in the early 1930s and had political militias, it had little effect in general and was "easily dodged" (Stengers 1965; Schepens 1980).[26] These groups, however, were of limited size and could not really constitute a danger to the democratic system or to public order. When Rex came on the scene, the strategy adopted by Degrelle was one of full respect for public order: the Rexist "order and protection" squads, replaced by the *Gardes Rexistes* in January 1937, were uniformed but unarmed. After Degrelle's electoral defeat of April 1937 and the failure of his electoral strategy, however, the law probably did have some preventive effect: "If they had not been prevented from doing so by the laws, the Rexists would have constituted fighting squads at this point" (Wallef 1980, 518).

In 1936 two pieces of legislation were passed which aimed to regulate public demonstrations—specifically prohibitions on the use of arms and on the public display of individuals or groups tending to evoke the impression of military formations. These laws were clearly aimed at setting legal limitations on the possible degeneration of public demonstrations in the period of the highest support for Rex. All in all, with the exception of the prohibition of by-elections analyzed before, the importance of special legislation in the defensive strategy against Rex was limited.

A Note on the VNV

The political representation of the Flemish movement had two different phases in the interwar years, after the introduction of universal suffrage opened up the possibility of independent political representation (Clough 1945; Elias 1972). The first phase was that of the *Frontpartij* in the 1920s, originating from the *Frontbeweging,* a secret organization that upheld the rights of Flemish soldiers and the Flemish language against the French-speaking army command.[27] The second phase, during the 1930s, was marked by the existence of two organizations: the *Verdinaso* and the VNV (Herremans 1948).

The leader of the *Verdinaso,* Joris van Severen, was an MP of the *Frontpartij* between 1921 and 1929, when, because of an internal party dispute, he was not

reelected to Parliament. In 1931 he founded the *Verdinaso,* a group which was both Fascist-authoritarian and secessionist. It supported the creation of an authoritarian society and a corporatist system. In its first phase, its goal was also the dismemberment of Belgium in a larger *Dietsche* motherland, including the Netherlands and Flanders. After 1937, this ideal evolved from *Dietschland* to *Dietsche Rijk*: a larger territorial unity including the Netherlands, Luxembourg, and the entirety of Belgium, a concept reconcilable with the manifestations of strong Belgian nationalism shown by the group in this phase. The movement was militarized: it had a militia, with uniform and symbols, salutes, and the like.

The most important Flemish party of the 1930s, the *Vlaams Nationaal Verbond* was established in 1933 under the leadership of Staf de Clercq, unifying all Flemish organizations, which, whether strong, such as the old *Frontpartij,* or weak, such as the many regional and local ones, had always operated separately. A unified organization would have constituted a better means of recovering from the electoral defeat of Flemish nationalism in the 1932 elections, when for the first time it suffered a setback (from eleven seats in 1929 to nine—see table 5.1). The most marked change from the 1920s was a move towards an authoritarian, corporatist, antiparty ideology of reference; in the 1920s, the majority of the representatives of Flemish nationalism—and certainly the *Frontpartij*—were opposed to the Belgian state but not to democracy as such. The VNV instead sought the reunification of Flanders and the Netherlands under a corporate-authoritarian political order, which would have kept the new political entity clear from disorderly democracy. Financed by Hitler, the movement adopted the *Führerprinzip,* and also had militias, uniforms, distinctive salutes, parades, and so on. Many of its leaders overtly sympathized with the Nazi regime (Stengers 1965).

The Belgian state responded to the rise of Flemish nationalism after World War I by progressively recognizing the linguistic and cultural autonomy of Flanders (Siegemund 1989; Busekist 1998). There were several language laws, which allowed for a moderate and progressive recognition of the status of Flemish language and culture, but—and this was often at the core of protests by nationalist groups—most of these laws were insufficiently and slowly implemented, and at times dodged. In 1918 the government promised to "flemishize" the University of Ghent, but this was a slow process, completed only in 1930. In 1921 a law specified that the public officials were to know the language of the region where they operated, but it was not implemented perfectly, especially in

Brussels. In 1932 a law enshrined the principle of monolingualism in each of the two regions, with bilingualism in Brussels. In fact, attempts to achieve global bilingualism failed because it was unacceptable to the Walloons. Councils belonging to the Brussels area could freely choose their language of administration, and every ten years bordering councils could ask to join the Brussels area, thus benefitting from the possibility to choose. In 1932, this principle was introduced in the school system, and in 1935 and 1938 to the legal system and to the army, respectively. (Each soldier was to be commanded in his mother tongue.) These laws suffered from partial implementation, however (Witte and Craeybeckx 1987).

It must be emphasized here that during the crisis of the years 1936-37, the Catholic Party was threatened not only by Rex, but also by the VNV in Flanders, where the Flemish party received about 160,000 votes in the 1936 elections—about 13.5% of the vote in that region. In the same elections, the Catholic Party lost about 100,000 votes, marking a hemorrhaging of about 10% of the votes at the regional level. The political orientation of the VNV was in fact markedly Catholic, which posed the Catholic Party the problem of devising a new strategy in Flanders as well. In Flanders after 1936, there were in fact several attempts to regroup the Flemish Catholics in different coalitions. Simplifying somewhat, these projects—made possible by an innumerable series of private meetings and public interventions by various figures in the Catholic world—oscillated between two poles of attraction. First, there was the coalition of Rex and VNV, stemming from the agreement signed by Degrelle and de Clercq in October 1936, in which a fusion between the Flemish sector of Rex and the VNV was prescribed. The second pole was the Catholic Party, which, although in disarray after the sound electoral defeat, reacted to the new situation in Flanders with an important organizational change: in October 1936, the Catholic Union appointed a "directorate" endowed with full powers as the leading body of the party. It would be divided into two wings, called *Parti Social Chrétien* (PCS) and *Katholieke Vlaamse Volkspartij* (KVV), which would be responsible for the activities of the Party in Wallonie and Flanders, respectively (Mabille 1986).

The negotiations for the regrouping of the Catholics in a coalition around Rex and the VNV, in which in all likelihood the *völkisch* and antidemocratic elements would have prevailed, went on independently of the attempts to form a right-wing nationwide "*bloc d'ordre*" described above (Gérard 1985). However, what prevailed in the crucial phase was the other possible solution:

Alphonse-Pierre Verbist, the leader of the KVV, started negotiations with the VNV, which ended in an agreement of principle in December 1936. This agreement remained at a rather vague level, but it must be remarked that the conditions in which it was signed were most unfavorable: to mention just one example, during these very weeks the government was very active in its propaganda campaign against the VNV, which paralleled the one directed against Rex. Although this tendency towards an alliance between VNV and the Flemish section of the Catholic Party came to a halt a few weeks later due to the opposition of the Christian Labor Union and a public intervention by the bishops (Gérard 1985, 477–78), it had the effect of providing at least a partial counter to the drift towards the inclusion of Rex and VNV in a right-wing Catholic front in Flanders, which could also have had an effect in the same direction at the national level. In the elections of 1939, the Catholic Party managed to recover about 4% of the votes, while the VNV, exploiting the collapse of Rex, increased its share of votes by 1.5% in the region. After that, the war then of course radically changed the situation.

The Belgian case fits the model of a political crisis characterized by a sudden increase in votes by one or more antisystem actors, throwing the established but fragile political equilibrium of the country into disarray. Expectations about the rise of the support for the antisystem actors, in particular for Rex, brought to light the political tensions and contradictions existing in the governing majority and triggered the emergence of defectionist tendencies, the most important of which were in the right wing of the Catholic Party. The project of political realignment at the right end of the political spectrum pursued by the traditionalist Catholic leaders failed in the end, but the situation of extreme fluidity and uncertainty, and in particular the internal instability of the Catholic Party in that phase could easily have degenerated into a situation in which the Party dissolved, thereby offering fertile ground to more adventurous projects, even more threatening to the persistence of democracy in the country. This perspective was avoided mainly because of the difficult struggle of the internal majority of the Catholic Party to keep the party within the democratic coalition with the Socialists and the Liberals, a solution favored by the head of state, who supported it with determination through his active interventions in the coalition-making process. Once stabilized in a new coalition, the democratic forces and the government started responding, blow by blow, to the attacks of Rex, while at the same time endeavoring, mainly with

public appeals, to win back to the democratic cause those voters who had gone over to Rex. Again we find, as in Czechoslovakia, a mix of "militancy" and "incorporation" strategies, each complementing the other. Unlike in Czechoslovakia, though, legal repression and restriction of freedoms were less intense; moreover, apart from some ultimately marginal episodes, the struggle remained within the boundaries of the pluralist dialectic. This was not the case in Finland, as we shall see in the next chapter.

CHAPTER SIX

Finland

> Analysis of totalitarian movements has, with good reason, most frequently centered upon those movements which succeeded in gaining total power over the processes of government. In assessing the strength and weaknesses of such movements it would be important also to understand why European parliamentary governments did not in all, instead of only in some, cases collapse under the pressure of extreme right wing movements. If parliamentary government is to survive, knowledge of the locus of democratic strength is imperative. In this respect, study of those extreme right wing movements which failed to reach their ultimate goal is of considerable importance. —M. RINTALA, *Three Generations*

Finnish democracy, established with the independence of the country from Russia with the Constitution of 1919, survived not one but two serious anti-system threats during the interwar years. During the 1920s, the government met the Communist challenge, which was heavily backed by Soviet Russia, with strong repression. Although this strategy was enough to keep the Communists at bay, at the beginning of the 1930s a rising extreme right movement pressured the government into definitively eradicating Finnish Communism from the political scene. The extreme right-wing Lapua Movement then threatened the existence of democratic government, prompting a political crisis that reached its peak in 1931–32, when the Movement was outlawed after attempting an armed insurrection. The disbandment of Lapua did not mean the end of the extreme right-wing challenge to Finnish democracy, however. Although after 1932 it never again became as dangerous and aggressive as Lapua had, the challenge of the extreme right would not be completely overcome until 1935–36. In fact, the new incarnation of the Finnish extreme right, the Patriotic People's Movement (*Isänmaallinen Kansanliike,* IKL), founded in 1932, quickly managed to gain substantial influence over the more traditional

conservative political circles of the Finnish establishment, thereby again destabilizing Finnish democracy for some years.

Again the cohesion of a democratic front in difficult times was the key to overcoming those challenges, even though in Finland, due to the heritage of the Civil War, this front did not coincide with the government majority that confronted the crisis. The Social Democratic Party was in fact an important element of the democratic front in opposing both left- and right-wing extremism, even though it and some of the bourgeois parties would only enter a stable governmental alliance in the second half of the 1930s. In the "White" camp, the heritage of the Civil War could not conceal entirely the important political differences between the more centrist bourgeois parties (the liberal National Progressive Party, the Agrarians, and part of the Swedish People's Party) and the more rightist ones (a minority of the Swedish People's Party and, most of all, the conservative National Coalition). Although not overlapping with the government-opposition divide, the difference between democrats and nondemocrats emerged quite clearly during the crises from the attitude of the political forces vis-à-vis extremism. In the 1920s, the Communist leadership made substantial efforts to hegemonize the working-class organizations, with successes in some areas, but ultimately it failed: the Finnish Social Democrats distanced themselves from leftist radicalism, thus depriving the Communist movement of any outlet for their subversive project. The emergence of the Lapua Movement instead made serious inroads in the bourgeois political establishment, parts of which toyed for some time with the idea of using the Movement to stabilize the hegemony of the "White" bloc in the country. The aggressiveness of Lapua, which swept the country with an unprecedented wave of political violence after the Civil War, demonstrated very soon, however, that the Movement was not controllable from above. Thus, after the pressure from the Lapuans had pushed the government to intensify their repression against the Communists by eradicating any Communist activity in Finnish politics, the bourgeois parties—with the exception of the conservative National Coalition—increasingly turned their backs to the Movement. The political isolation of Lapua led them to pursue their antidemocratic goals by an armed insurrection, which was repressed in 1932. In the following years, the IKL would not manage to break the cohesion of the bourgeois parties against it—again with the exception of National Coalition—and despite its efforts, the party would not be able to trigger serious centrifugal forces in the party system.

The analysis below not only investigates these political dynamics, it also gives due importance to the actions of a single old conservative politician, Per Evind Svinhufvud, who, first as prestigious figure of the "White" political camp and then as prime minister and president, managed to pose himself as a credible point of reference for the Lapua Movement during the worst phase of the crisis, while never hesitating first to repress the excesses of the Movement and then to outlaw it. Svinhufvud's resolve proved crucial in key moments of the crisis: his contribution to the defense of the democratic system (even if he probably saw it more as a defense of public order and the rule of law) did not consist in stabilizing a governing coalition, as the head of state did in Czechoslovakia and Belgium, but in acting directly in defense of the system, curbing the excesses of the Lapua Movement with all necessary means.

As we will see, militancy much more than incorporation characterized the defensive reactions against extremism in interwar Finland. This is largely explained by the particular nature of the challenges that the Finnish democratic system had to endure: the Communists were strongly supported by the country's giant totalitarian neighbor, the Soviet Union, and performed a great deal of underground activities, while the Lapuans unleashed a wave of episodes of political violence comparable to those that contributed to undermine Italian and German democracy during the same period. Accommodation was obviously present too—the elimination of the Communists in 1930–31, although obviously repressive for them, was at the same time an incorporation measure vis-à-vis the Lapuans, whom the government hoped to pacify and bring back to the realm of democratic dialectic by satisfying what at the time was their main request. Rather than the *absence* of incorporation measures, the mix of defense used in Finland is marked by the *failure* of incorporation measures, as explained in more detail in chapter 7. Following the usual pattern, the chapter analyzes the development of the challenge and then the measures of defense used against the Communists, the Lapua Movement, and the Patriotic People's Movement in order.

The Communist Challenge

In the first half of 1918, Finland, which had just declared its independence from Russia, was shattered by the Civil War between "Red" and "White" Guards—that is, Socialist and anti-Socialist militias backed by Russian and

German troops, respectively.[1] The victory of the "White" forces left a monopoly of power in the hands of the bourgeois parties: the conservative National Coalition, the Agrarian Union, the liberal National Progressive Party, and the Swedish People's Party, which spoke for the Swedish-speaking minority.

In the 1920s, the new rulers of independent Finland had to confront the challenge mounted by the Communist organizations. The leaders of the Finnish Communist Party (*Suomen Kommunistinen Puolue,* SKP) had emigrated to Soviet Russia after their defeat in the Civil War and ran the party from there. In 1919, they started building an underground organization in Finland in order to prepare for an armed revolution. The decision of the government to keep the frontier areas with the Soviet Union under martial law until 1920 also greatly affected the first SKP attempts to establish links between Finnish territory and Moscow. Some SKP emissaries were even "shot while trying to escape" (Upton 1973, 121). Already during the campaign for the parliamentary elections of March 1919, the SKP issued a call to workers to boycott the vote (Hodgson 1967, 87). This move did not have the intended effect: workers mainly supported the Social Democratic Party (*Suomen Sosialidemokraattinen Puolue,* SDP), which obtained 80 seats, making it the largest party in the Finnish Parliament, the Eduskunta (see table 6.1).[2] This disappointing result, as well as the constant political distancing on the part of the Social Democrats, very soon led to a change in the tactics of Communists in Finland and to the establishment of a two-track tactic of underground and public activities. This change of tactics was due principally to Otto Kuusinen, one of the most important leaders and theorists of Finnish and international Communism.[3] So the underground work continued, and a network of cells was built whose members typically had very limited knowledge of the other cells and of the system as a whole (e.g., Paastela 1991, 6). At the same time, "public" activity was also intensified. On the one hand, Communist representatives participated in (or, perhaps more accurately, infiltrated) workers' organizations, taking many of them over. On the other hand, they emphasized influencing public opinion by means of intense political propaganda, for which aim a "public" Communist party, called the Finnish Socialist Workers' Party (*Suomen Sosialistinen Työväenpuolue,* SSTP), was created. The creation of the SSTP also responded to the political necessity of establishing and developing contacts with the internal left wing of the Social Democratic Party. Although subject to oscillations and internal struggles and severely hampered by govern-

Table 6.1 Seats in the Eduskunta, 1919–1939

	Election Year																	
	1919		1922		1924		1927		1929		1930		1933		1936		1939	
Party	*N*	(%)	*N*	(%)	*N*	(%)	*N*	(%)	*N*	(%)	*N*	(%)	*N*	(%)	*N*	(%)	*N*	(%)
Communists (SSTP)	—	—	27	13.5	18	9	20	10	23	11.5	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Social Democratic Party (SDP)	80	40	53	26.5	60	30	60	30	59	29.5	66	33	78	39	83	41.5	85	42.5
Christian Workers' Party (CWP)	2	1	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
National Progress Party (NPP)	26	13	15	7.5	17	8.5	10	5	7	3.5	11	5.5	11	5.5	7	3.5	6	3
Peasants' League (Agrarians)	42	21	45	22.5	44	22	52	26	60	30	59	29.5	53	26.5	53	26.5	56	28
Small Peasants' Party (SPP)	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	1	0.5	3	1.5	1	0.5	2	1
People's Party (PP)	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	2	1	1	0.5	—	—
National Coalition (NC)	28	14	35	17.5	38	19	34	17	28	14	42	21	18	9	20	10	25	12.5
Patriotic People's Movement (IKL)	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	14	7	14	7	8	4
Swedish People's Party (SwPP)	22	11	25	12.5	23	11.5	24	12	23	11.5	20	10	21	10.5	21	10.5	18	9
Swedish Left Wing (SV)	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	1	0.5	—	—	—	—	—	—
Total seats	200	100	200	100	200	100	200	100	200	100	200	100	200	100	200	100	200	100

mental repression, this two-track strategy was in effect until 1930–31, when all "public" Communist activity was outlawed by the anti-extremist laws.

The Defense

The Attitude of the Social Democratic Party

The efforts of the Communists to create divisions within the Social Democratic Party failed. The party, in fact, managed to keep to its moderate positions in spite of the presence of radical tendencies in a substantial part of the working class. The party had revived after the defeat in the Civil War under the aegis of a small group of Socialists who had dissociated themselves from the "Red" positions and had taken no active part in the war. Already before the end of the Civil War this group, led by Vainö Tanner, had published a manifesto that described the "Red Revolution"—that is, the Socialist insurrection that started the Civil War—as "a criminal mistake" and called on the workers to commit themselves to peaceful reform (Rintala 1969). In November 1918 the Helsinki Workers' Council was reformed and at the end of December it held a provisional Congress. This was to be the cradle of the "Reform" Social Democratic Party, which would remain under the control of the moderate wing led by Tanner for the whole interwar period. Tanner's moderate line did not go unchallenged in the party: especially in the 1920s, left-wing radical factions made their voice heard. However, the decidedly antiradical Tanner leadership, continuously seeking cooperation with the centrist parties, always had the last word on the official party line, increasingly so after the 1930 Congress.[4] The strong repression of the Communists in 1930–31 increased Tanner's prestige as a credible defender of the labor movement: in fact, although never compromising with the Communists, the Social Democrats consistently opposed all special repressive legislation, as we shall see.

As of 1919, the Finnish Communist movement systematically attempted to infiltrate and take over—with different degrees of success—the Social Democratic organizations in three arenas: the party, the unions, and the working-class associations. The attempt to take over the party was stifled in the cradle: at the first party congress in December 1918, the majority of the Social Democratic leaders managed to keep the party at a healthy remove from Communism. By the last months of 1919, Kuusinen's men had gained substantial influence in the circles of the Social Democratic left wing and had started a

heated debate on the future of Finnish social democracy, preparing for the clash in the party's second congress, scheduled for December 1919. Just before the congress, the left wing accused the moderate faction of having distorted the election of the congress delegates in their favor.[5] Be that as it may, in the congress, Tanner's wing won all the decisive votes and remained firmly in control of the party. At that stage, the defeated left-wing faction split—more than 50,000 members left—and called for the formation of a new party, which would become the SSTP. The new party would participate in bourgeois institutions for the purpose of preparing the working class for its revolutionary destiny, while relentlessly exposing the Social Democrats as traitors to the working class. On the occasion of the founding congress of the SSTP in May 1920, the government undertook its first act of overt repression. When the congress proposed affiliation with the Comintern, the police stopped the meeting and arrested eleven of the organizers, who were charged with sedition. In June 1920 the Helsinki local Social Democratic section, which had been in the hands of the left since September 1919, proclaimed itself as the SSTP on the basis of the same program of the SSTP minus any reference to the Comintern, a move which gained the party the temporary toleration by the authorities (Hodgson 1967, 99–100). The new group had some organizational difficulties—it took about six months to set up a party council that represented just twelve of the sixteen Finnish electoral districts—but it quickly managed to acquire 25,000 members and to win 341 seats in the local elections in December 1920, about a third of those awarded to the Social Democrats.

The Communist attempts were more successful in the trade union movement, which had also been revived in June 1918 under moderate socialist leadership. In November 1919 Kuusinen organized the takeover of the Woodworkers' Union, the fourth-largest in the country, and in its congress of May 1920, the Communist faction triumphantly took over the trade union confederation *Suomen Ammattijärjestö* (SAJ), winning both a large majority of delegates and control of its executive bodies (Knoellinger 1960, 59–81). Under Communist leadership, the SAJ broke any official links with the SDP—it was officially stated in the congress that the individual unions could support "any political party" they wished—and committed itself to a program of class war, exactly as set out in the SSTP program, according to which the trade unions should constantly wage war on the system by refusing any settlement or policy of conciliation. As a consequence, by 1920 the level of strike activity was already three times higher than in 1919. In the course of 1921 the leftists took over

almost all the individual trade unions not already under their control and programmatically turned them towards class war. Particularly important was the takeover of the union of transport workers, which represented nearly a third of the membership of the SAJ: the new leadership declared that the purpose of the union was "shaking the whole capitalist system" and pursuing the "socialist revolution." After these successes, given the governmental repression in other arenas, the SAJ became the only organization in which the Communists could operate on a national basis, especially in the second half of the 1920s.

The government tried to enact repression against the Communists also in the trade union arena, but they could not do it as freely as they could against Communist party organizations. In 1924, on the basis of a court decision stating that the SAJ had been involved in criminal activities, the government tried to suppress at least those local branches controlled by the Communists. To this end, the minister of the interior sent circulars to the prefects. The attempt was blocked by the intervention of the International Labor Organization (ILO), which the SAJ alerted in August 1924: repression of the SAJ, the only labor confederation in the country, would violate international agreements on the freedom of trade union activity (Upton 1973, 168). The possibility for repression would only come a few years later: in 1928, the new line adopted by the Comintern induced a renewed radicalization of the Communist faction, which led the Social Democratic minority to abandon the confederation and to form the *Suomen Ammattiliittojen Keskusjärjestö* (SAK) in July 1930.[6] The SAK was a new national trade union confederation to which only Social Democratic and politically neutral unions belonged. At that stage the government, now under increased pressure from the extreme right, could enact repression: in September 1930 legal proceedings were initiated against the SAJ on the grounds that it was a criminal organization. The SAJ was condemned and dissolved shortly afterwards, and its assets were confiscated.

Communist infiltration of the other working-class associations was also generally successful, but government repression intervened earlier than it did in the case of the unions. The Communists managed to achieve control over the Social Democratic Women's League, the Workers' Temperance League, and the Workers' Sport League (Hodgson 1967), but their main strategic advancement in this arena was the takeover of the Youth League, one of the most important Social Democratic associations. Formed again after the Civil War, the League had revived and developed quickly, so much so that already by 1919

it had about 250 branches and some 15,000 members. Exploiting the League's dissatisfaction with Tanner's moderate, "revisionist" line, Kuusinen's Communists were able to take it over quickly in its congress of September 1919, in which the League declared that class reconciliation was impossible and therefore that the Social Democratic Party should only be supported as far as it adhered to a policy of class war. From that moment on, the League came under firm Communist control, acting as a propaganda machine and recruiting ground for the Communist party (Upton 1973, 126). Starting in October 1919, the League published a periodical (*The Socialist Journal*) whose columns were open to Kuusinen, who used it to publish the entire program of the Comintern and other propaganda articles. The government banned the League in April 1923 on a charge of promoting illegal activities. The League was reconstituted in December of the same year under a slightly different name and banned again in November 1925, when its leaders were condemned to a maximum sentence of three years in prison. Repression led the Communists to turn mainly to underground activity in order to recruit young people: after 1925 the underground "Finnish Communist Youth League" was strengthened, eventually having about 2,000 members and 110 cells. For "public" activity, the "study groups" were founded; it was at one of these meetings that the accident after which the Lapua Movement was named took place.[7]

Thus, the Social Democrats were under constant attack from the Communists at the party, union, and association levels, but, although resisting the offers or attacks from the Communist movement was no easy task, the Social Democrats never yielded to radicalism. At the party level, the moderates won the battle of 1919–20 and, after the foundation of the SSTP, the rift between the Social Democratic leadership and the Communists was complete. For example, there was virtually never any electoral cooperation between the two parties: the Social Democrats refused all proposals of electoral alliance, in which "each party would keep its own political principles," offered by the SSTP before the parliamentary elections of July 1922. Sporadic alliances in local elections were formed, but the two parties never cooperated in national elections (Törnudd 1968).[8] Collaboration on specific political issues also remained rare, and it normally did not involve major issues. A possible exception to this rule would be the week-long joint street demonstrations that the two parties staged in January 1923 in support of an amnesty for Civil War political prisoners. Otherwise, aside from a few trivial examples,[9] the SDP never indulged in radicalism and was consistently uncompromising vis-à-vis the Communists:

just to give a few examples, during the early severe years of the Depression in 1929–33, the party simply demanded governmental relief programs; in agricultural policy the Social Democrats always supported small private ownership (Paavonen 1987). When the leaders of the SSTP were arrested in January 1922, the SKP issued a circular with the intent of alerting the underground network, since the SSTP could be formally suppressed at any moment. In the circular, it was suggested that workers steal tools and send them to Russia to relieve the famine of Russian workers. When a copy of this document made its way to SDP officials, they published it immediately with comments on the depravity of Communists who wanted to "transform workers into thieves" (Upton 1973, 148–49).

Possibly, in addition to the genuine ideological orientations of the Social Democratic leadership, the party's intransigence with respect to the Communists was also partly induced by the deterrent effect of the prompt reactions of the bourgeois establishment to any expression of left-wing radicalism in those years. For example, immediately after the demonstrations of January 1923, two eminent figures of the Finnish right, both among the "victors" of the Civil War, Svinhufvud and Gustaf Mannerheim,[10] supported the foundation of a broad anti-Communist movement called the "League for the Defense of Finland" (Mäkelä 1987). Three months later the government banned the Social Democratic Youth League. Governmental repression was probably even of higher importance in indirectly supporting the Social Democrats in an arena where they had lost the battle against Communist takeover. For example, the hostile attitude of the government towards the Communist-led SAJ, which culminated in the failed attempts to dissolve it in 1924, had the indirect effect of reinforcing the position of the internal Social Democratic faction: if they had split and set up a separate union organization, the repression of the rump SAJ would not have violated the treaties, which would have made it virtually certain. This situation gave the Social Democratic minority within the SAJ a disproportionately high influence. Although being constantly denounced by the Communist majority as the "splitter," it obtained several concessions: for example, it managed to veto the decision to adhere to the Profintern, the international association of Bolshevik unions; to lead the SAJ, after 1923, to prohibit its member unions from affiliating with political parties; to achieve overrepresentation in the governing organs of the confederation; to put a halt to "merely political" strikes in 1926; and to reinforce cooperation of the SAJ with the ILO (Upton 1973, 171; Kirby 1979).

The Repression of the Communists during the 1920s

The attitude of all "White" parties ruling Finland during those years was, albeit with varying intensity, uncompromisingly anti-Communist, and the Finnish governments mainly used police repression against both the underground and public activities of the Communist movement. Often, especially as far as the actions of the secret National Security Police were concerned, repression was carried out without a full and univocal legal basis, either by interpreting the law in a manner favorable to the police or simply in an illegal fashion.

From a merely "numerical" point of view, bourgeois governments had no need of the support of the Social Democratic Party to survive in Parliament, but that the largest party in Parliament, as the SDP was between 1919 and 1928, never opposed the repression of Communists in those years and took a largely hostile attitude towards them certainly made the pursuit of this repressive strategy easier. The measures enforced against the Communists and their public activities were not only directed against the organization but also against single individuals, be they leaders, representatives, or members of the SSTP or organizations connected with it. These individuals were normally given heavy prison sentences for their "subversive" activities. In other words, the government used every legal means at its disposal to repress the "public" Communist organizations. In order to do so, it referred to court rulings from as early as May 1919[11] holding that the Communist party was a seditious association and that membership in it automatically constituted the crime of sedition (*valtiopetos*) or, in the most serious cases, of treason (*maanpetos*). These were the "criminal activities" that underpinned the bans of the Social Democratic Youth League (twice) and of the SAJ (Mäkelä 1984).

No provisions of forced disenfranchisement ("explicit electoral barriers") were used against the Communists in the 1920s, so it was always possible for them, despite the continuous repression, to participate in electoral competitions. As far as thresholds and biases built into the electoral law are concerned, the following general observations apply. The electoral system for parliamentary elections was based on the d'Hondt procedure applied in electoral districts of medium magnitude, or about fourteen seats (Rae 1967). The system in general slightly overrepresented larger competitors, be these individual parties or alliances, at the level of individual districts, but it did not entail high effective thresholds (Lijphart and Gibberd 1977; Lijphart 1994) that could keep any formation with a substantial electoral following outside Parliament (Braunias

Table 6.2 Defensive Measures Used against the Finnish Communists in the 1920s

Defensive Measure	Status
Ban	Socialist Youth League (1922 and 1925) banned. SAJ (1930) banned.
Explicit electoral barriers	Not used
Electoral thresholds and biases	Not relevant
Special legislation	Not passed
On institutional core	Not modified: charges of sedition and high treason widely used to enforce large-scale police repression, mainly against individuals.
On public order	Not modified since 1919
On propaganda	Not modified: "normal press laws," broadly interpreted, were used in court cases.
Other laws and administrative provisions	None
Access to state radio	Data not available
Secret police repression	Very widely used to infiltrate and periodically dismantle underground activities of the SKP
"Public" police repression	Widely used against Communist individuals. The whole parliamentary group arrested in 1923.
Appeals to public opinion	No
Policy concessions	No
Creation of alternative organizations	No

1932; Törnudd 1968). Thus, the electoral system had no exclusionary effect against extremist groups. However, in the delicate situation of 1930–31 even the slight bias of the system would prove important.

From very early on, the security police constituted the main obstacle to the SKP's activities—party agents were arrested as early as 1919. Repression by public police also played an important role. After disbanding the Helsinki headquarters of the SSTP in 1919, in May 1920 the Finnish police broke up the party's first congress, even though it was present there "on rather dubious legal grounds" (Upton 1973, 130), as soon as the motion to affiliate to the Comintern was presented. Eleven of the organizers were charged with sedition and, after a trial, sentenced to varying periods of hard labor (Mäkelä 1984).

In January 1922 the SSTP held a party council and, among other things, drafted a manifesto in which they did not conceal their revolutionary intent and especially defined the fight "for the defense of Soviet Russia" as the main task of workers wanting to realize socialism. At the end of the same month almost the entire executive committee of the SSTP and its leading newspaper editors were arrested and charged with treason (Hodgson 1967, 121). The legal grounds for "treason" were shaky: if treason is defined as aiding an enemy, Russia was not formally such for Finland, since the two states were at peace from 1920, the year of the Treaty of Tartu (Paasivirta 1988). On the occasion of the trials, held in April 1922, large Communist demonstrations took place supporting the defendants, which did not prevent them from being given a sentence of four years of hard labor, one that was later upheld on appeal. As Upton puts it, "at one blow, the Communist movement in Finland was decapitated" (Upton 1973, 147). The SSTP fought the campaign for the parliamentary elections of July 1922 under constant police harassment and continuous arrests of party activists and cadres.[12]

In May 1923 the SSTP decided to apply for formal registration with the authorities as a political party. In order to increase its chances of approval, it changed its name into "Workers Party of Finland."[13] In July 1923 the Chief of the Security Police informed the government that he could prove that the SSTP was being directed from Moscow, provided he had access to the archives and permission to arrest the leaders. On this basis, on 3 August 1923 the whole parliamentary group, the party committee, the main party officials, and the editors of the party's papers were arrested—189 people in all—and the party's assets and printing presses sequestered (Matti 1966). After ten months trials were held, under the charge that the SSTP was a criminal organization; the maximum sentence was three and a half years. The prosecution could not

prove any seditious *activity,* so the trials focused on the *intent,* as expressed in the 1920 program and in the speeches and writing of the leaders; there was also circumstantial evidence that the SSTP "had followed Comintern directives" (Upton 1973). As a result, the SSTP's assets were definitively confiscated (although the printing presses had to be released). After 1923 the SSTP rebuilt its organizational structure, this time in the form of a network of local election committees (estimated at about 193 a few years later, in 1928) to avoid the risk of a new ban once again decapitating the party. In fact, although the Communist organizations and their members were affected by repressive measures, "no restriction [was] placed on electoral freedom" (Mäkelä 1984, 164). This reconstructed "party" would take part in the elections held from 1924 until 1929 under the name of "Association of Socialist Workers and Smallholders."

The data reported in table 6.3 is evidence of the intensity of police activity against the Communists in the 1920s. The table reports the (approximate) number of Communists arrested on charges of sedition or treason from 1920 to 1935.[14] For an idea of the impact of this continuous stream of arrests on the Communist organizations, it should be noted that the maximum estimated number of activists at any one time before 1945 was 2,000 (Upton 1973). Although the table refers to both public and underground activity, the data suggest that the continuous police repression was effective in crippling the potential of the Communist challenge.

The Communists attempted to infiltrate the Finnish army too, and again met with governmental repression. The "military section" of the central committee of the SKP tried to organize subversion among Finnish conscripts starting in the summer of 1919. Up to 1925, its main activity was the distribution of subversive literature among conscripts. After 1925, an effort was made instead to establish actual party cells in the army ranks. By 1927, only seventeen such cells had been formed with 121 members, as well as a mimeographed newsletter, the "Red Soldier," about 250 copies of which were circulated monthly. Although on the whole Communist subversion in the Finnish army was far from constituting a real danger, the bourgeois press depicted these attempts as a "threat to national security" (Upton 1973). Thus, in October 1927 the Communist network in the Finnish army was smashed, and the organizers of the military section of the SKP central committee were arrested, charged with espionage, and a few months later tried and convicted. The investigation that led to these arrests unexpectedly opened up leads to the whole network of underground Communist activities. One of the men arrested became a police informer, and in April 1928 the security police took in

Table 6.3 Number of Finnish Communists Arrested for Sedition or Treason, 1920–1935

Year	Number of arrests	Notes
1920	300	
1921	n.d.	
1922	n.d.	January: entire Central Committee of SSTP and editors of its most important publications are arrested for treason. May: 11 SSTP high-ranking officials are arrested. Throughout the year: many cadres of SSTP arrested.
1923	300 (189 party elite)	August: whole parliamentary group, party committee, main party officials, and editors of all the party's papers are arrested, together with many other functionaries.
1924	n.d.	
1925	n.d.	
1926	112	
1927	20[a]	October: SKP network in Finnish army is discovered and disbanded.
1928	94	April: entire leadership of SKP's underground organization, trade union activists, and two MPs of SSTP are arrested.
1929	n.d.	
1930	350	[First anti-Communist laws passed]
1931	518	[The bulk of anti-Communist legislation is passed.] Public activity of Communist Party is completely eradicated.
1932	454	
1933	558	
1934	371	
1935	257	

Source: Data from Upton (1973); Mäkelä (1984).

[a] The sharp decrease in the number of arrests in 1927 was due to the fact that the Social Democratic government, led by Tanner and holding office from December 1926 to December 1927, checked the security police, preventing them from having too free a hand in dealing with political opponents. Another factor that probably contributed to the same result was that one of the Social Democratic ministers, Mauno Pekkala, was the brother of a leading Communist MP; thus, the governmental proceedings were probably leaked and the Communist leadership had direct information on the possible moves of the cabinet (Upton 1973, 175). In general, however, the attitude of the Social Democratic government was uncompromising vis-à-vis the Communists.

the whole underground leadership, the trade union faction leaders, and two Communist MPs.[15] This almost destroyed the underground network of the SKP and impaired the public activity of the Communists; they had not yet fully recovered when the final blow was delivered with the passing and implementation of special anti-extremist legislation, which wiped out all public activities of the Communists.

Although the Communists had a remarkable following (despite the harsh repression, they consistently received about 10 percent of the popular vote) and pursued extremely aggressive propaganda tactics intended to hegemonize the working-class organizational world at all levels, they did not manage to cause centrifugality at the left end of the party spectrum, nor did they cause severe strife within the Social Democratic Party, the most direct victim of their endeavors. To be sure, the eventual defection of the Social Democrats to extremist positions (or the takeover of the party by extremist elements) would not have endangered the stability of the government per se, since the Social Democratic Party was not part of governing coalition. However, such a scenario would certainly have given rise to a much harsher conflict between left and right in Finland, one that would have reproduced the divisions of the Civil War of 1918 and decidedly placed the democratic system into grave peril. Tanner's resolve to keep the party to moderate positions, at the same time at a healthy remove from both the Communists and the "White" establishment (but open to cooperation with the latter's more moderate sectors) avoided this scenario, despite the strong efforts of the Communists to radicalize the situation, which exposed him and the Social Democratic leadership to constant attacks. The resistance of the Social Democrats on moderate positions was helped indirectly by the constant anti-Communist repression enacted by the government, which thwarted the Communists' efforts to widen their consensus in the working class. This should not be mistaken as an underground alliance between the moderate leadership of the Social Democrats and the "White" establishment. The events of 1930–31, the phase of deepest crisis for Finnish democracy during the interwar years, would once again highlight the gulf between these two forces. And it is to the analysis of these events that we now turn.

The Challenge of the Lapua Movement

Between 1929 and 1932 Finnish democracy was threatened by the emergence of the right-wing extremist Lapua Movement. Under its pressure, the bourgeois majority in Parliament passed special legislation that enabled the govern-

ment to put an end to any public activity of the Communists. In a successive period, though, when the Lapua Movement explicitly attacked Finnish democracy itself, the government resorted to that very legislation to outlaw it. In these difficult years, in which democracy came extremely close to collapsing, Finnish democratic elites managed to respond to the profound political crisis first by yielding to the requests of the extreme right to repress the Communists and then repressing the extreme right too.

In the political climate of the late 1920s, when the Finnish Communists, following Comintern directives, intensified their public demonstrations and propaganda against the institutions of the republic, a political clash in a small town, insignificant in itself, ignited the potential appeal of the anti-Communist message.[16] On 23 November 1929, a Communist organization called the "Lapua Young Workers' Educational Association" held a meeting (for which authorities had granted the necessary permits) in Lapua, a rural and predominantly "White"-oriented community in Ostrobothnia, in west central Finland. On the same day, in the same town, the Lapua Cooperative Society, a farmer association, was celebrating its twenty-fifth anniversary, for which occasion preparations had been made. When the 400 Communist representatives arrived in Lapua there were clashes and fights, and their meeting was broken up. The same happened the following evening (Ingman 1930; Kivimäki 1932). This episode immediately triggered throughout the country a series of meetings in which the Lapua Movement was launched, setting as its explicit political goal the eradication of the Communist threat in Finland by all possible means.[17] The documents approved in the meetings made it clear that, if the government did not pursue this aim strongly enough, there was "grave reason to fear" that the government would be forestalled by direct action by the people (e.g., Wuorinen 1965, 249). The main demand of the Movement was that cabinet and Parliament initiate and enact, respectively, legislation to outlaw Communism in Finland definitively. Specific legislative demands were put forward regarding the abolition of the constitutional rights of free press and association for the Communists, as well as their removal from Parliament and local representative bodies. Delegations from the regional branches of the Movement called on ministers and MPs almost daily in the final weeks of 1929, pressing them for the introduction of such legislation. During the following months, the Lapuans were responsible for a wave of political violence, mainly directed against the Communists—which was practically impossible for the state authorities to control.

The First Reactions of the Bourgeois Parties

The majority of bourgeois politicians were in general very sympathetic to the early actions of the Lapua Movement. In fact, many of the activists and representatives (even MPs) of the "White" parties were also members and activists of the Lapua Movement, as were many Civil Guards.[18] Although members of Lapua could be found in all four "bourgeois" parties, it can be said that the Agrarian Union and particularly the National Coalition party were the closest to the Movement and the ones whose membership was most intertwined with it. The president of the republic, Lauri Kristian Relander, belonged to the Agrarian party, and the government showed general approval for the Lapua Movement (see Kirby 1979, 83): when, ten days after the Lapua episode, the Communist MPs protested about what had happened with a formal question to the government, the answer from the cabinet was that those who had declared themselves against the law (that is, the Communists) could not then invoke the law for their protection (Upton 1973).

The government of the time was supported by a minority coalition of the Agrarians and the Progressives, and was led by the Agrarian leader Kyösti Kallio, whose intention at this stage was to exploit the anti-Communist push of the Lapuans to repress radical leftists, while at the same time seeking to control the Movement from above, mediating and avoiding excesses. Unlike the leaders of National Coalition, in fact, large parts of the Agrarians leadership were opposed to the violent and illegal methods used by the Lapuans, but they had to confront an electorate and a rank and file highly supportive of the Movement, and many of which took active part in it. The strategy of the Agrarian leaders was bound to fail: the Lapua Movement quickly became too strong and influential to be used for their purposes or even to be kept under control. Intense, widespread, and largely unpunished political violence was increasingly being used by Lapuans against Communist—and, in some cases, Social Democratic—activists and representatives: political murders, beatings, kidnappings, and acts of devastation inaugurated a true "reign of terror" throughout the whole country, one that went on for many months. The police and the local authorities were often passive, when not themselves actually implicated in the actions. As the minister of the interior put it in Parliament: "There is no right to provoke the risk of civil war [by reacting to or preventing the Lapuans' political violence] when the controversy is not over the matter itself, but merely over methods and tactics" (quoted in Rintala 1962a, 170). The

reaction of most of the bourgeois press and politicians was typically of support or understanding for the perpetrators of these political crimes. The outraged reaction from the Social Democrats and more sporadically from the more moderate sectors of the "White" parties was lost amid the wide popularity of the Lapuans' actions.

However, Kallio and the other moderate leaders soon realized that the situation would not be easy to control. In January 1930 Kallio, threatening the cabinet's resignation, managed to win approval for a bill reinforcing the power of the government to dissolve political associations. In the parliamentary debate, the Social Democrats opposed the bill, which in the end was passed only thanks to the fact that, on the crucial vote, eighteen of the party's fifty-nine MPs did not turn up to vote. In this situation of increasing political violence, the resignation of the cabinet would have constituted a much greater danger for parliamentary government than the bill itself (Rintala 1962b, 167). The same, however, did not happen in March, when the government presented a bill restricting the freedom of the press, also requested by the Lapuans. On that occasion, in fact, opposition came not only from the Social Democratic MPs, but also from within the bourgeois parties, many of whose representatives opposed the reform of the press laws as a violation of the rule of law and equality of rights. At that stage, the wave of violence peaked and the government lost control of the situation.[19] The Lapuans issued a formal ultimatum to the government to close Communist printing establishments and suspend their publications; dissolve Communist organizations under whatever guise they might appear; imprison Communist leaders, agitators, and supporters; and pass laws validating these actions. Thus, in June, Kallio authorized provincial governors by decree to suppress Communist newspapers if they deemed it necessary for the maintenance of order in the region of their competence. All Communist newspapers were thus suspended without any specific legal basis (Kirby 1979). Shortly afterwards, the cabinet presented to the Eduskunta a series of bills in which all the other demands of the Lapuans were conceded, obtained the explicit *ex post* support of parliament for closing down the Communist newspapers, and then (on 1 July) resigned under pressure from President Relander to give way to a more emphatically right-wing cabinet headed by Svinhufvud.[20]

During this parliamentary debate, sixteen out of the twenty-three members of the Communist parliamentary group were present—most of the absentees had been victims of acts of political violence. The Lapuans considered it a

provocation that the government had failed to arrest them. In reaction they planned a "March on Helsinki"—following the Italian example of the Fascist "Marcia su Roma" of 1922—with the aim of "definitively evicting the Communists from the parliament."[21] Thus, a few days after taking office, the new Prime Minister Svinhufvud decided to arrest all the Communist MPs; he then obtained a vote of confidence from Parliament—only the Social Democratic Party opposed—to approve this action, which again had a very doubtful basis in law.[22] On 7 July 1930, twelve thousand armed Lapuans led by Vihtori Kosola marched on Helsinki and were formally received in an official celebration by Relander and the new cabinet. Most of the marchers were Civil Guard members—armed, trained for military activity, and organized militarily, with regiments, battalions and companies. At Kosola's request, high-ranking military officers in service organized the whole march. President Relander had given his consent to their use in this task. The Ministry of Transport even arranged for a 50 percent reduction on train fares for participants of the march (Rintala 1962b, 177). Still in July, the minister of the interior prohibited all Communist activity by simple decree: meetings and outdoor celebrations as well as parades and other manifestations of Communist associations, organizations, and individuals were all banned. At the same time, he authorized the police to prevent even private gatherings of Communists. Again, no legal basis for such a decision yet existed.

The Svinhufvud cabinet included representatives of all four bourgeois parties and enjoyed a large majority in Parliament (59 percent). Ministerial posts were offered to representatives of the Lapua Movement, who declined the offer at the last moment. The first issue for the new cabinet was the package of anti-Communist bills initiated by the Kallio government. Apart from two bills, one limiting freedom of the press and one excluding Communists from local elections, the others were all constitutional amendments. As a consequence, a special procedure was needed for them to be passed: they would have to be approved by an absolute majority, and then "suspended" until the following elections, after which the new Parliament would have to approve them with a two-thirds majority. The delay until the following elections and the second approval with a two-thirds majority could only be superseded by a five-sixths majority vote in the first round, declaring the "urgency procedure" for those bills (Organic Law of the Chamber of Deputies of 1928, art. 67; see Kastari 1960). The Social Democratic Party, with its fifty-nine seats, until then opposed to repressive measures against the Communists, was in a position to veto

the urgency procedure even if it couldn't stop the first approval of the bills. Thus, detailed negotiation on the bills took place, in which the dissenting voices of several moderate representatives of the more centrist bourgeois parties were were very prominent. The main bone of contention for the Social Democrats had to do with the extension of governmental powers in cases of emergency and the discretionary powers granted to the administration to "disfranchise" Communists, points over which they fought tirelessly. After some time, it seemed that it would be possible to reach a compromise on the basis of amended versions of the bills, for which the Social Democrats would be willing to vote. Svinhufvud, however, was so intent on having the bills approved in their original form that he posed the question of confidence on them, thereby forcing a vote in Parliament. A cabinet crisis in the current situation of extreme public disorder and widespread political violence was virtually unthinkable and would certainly have tipped the country into chaos. Thus, almost all MPs belonging to the bourgeois parties voted in favor of the unamended bills, many of them going against their conscience. Elements of the Lapua Movement and the National Coalition (the most enthusiastic sponsor of the unamended bills) threatened, both covertly and overtly, the Social Democratic MPs, who nevertheless stood firm in their opposition, thus blocking the urgency procedure (Rintala 1962b, 181). The very next day (15 July), Svinhufvud and President Relander agreed to dissolve the Eduskunta and to call new elections for 1 and 2 October 1930. Alternative courses of action were available and were considered by Svinhufvud. One possibility would have been to wait for the elections scheduled for 1932, but this would have increased the risk of letting the situation in the country get even more out of control (Micheles Dean et al. 1934, 269). Another possibility that he considered—and discarded—was to resign in favor of the Lapua Movement leaders (Rintala 1962b, 182). In that case, a breakdown of democracy, or at least a very strong clash with Parliament—which would hardly have given its confidence to such a government—would have been an extremely likely outcome. It might even have led to a new civil war.

In any case, the main issue in the elections was whether the government parties could together obtain the two-thirds of the votes (134 out of 200) necessary to pass the anti-Communist bills in the new Parliament, the last resort before turning the country over to the violence of the Lapuans. No Communist candidates were allowed to participate in these elections: public gatherings of Communists were forbidden, and Communist leaders and representatives were either in prison, in hiding, or had fled to Russia. The absence

of Communists from the electoral competition, however, made the desired objective of two-thirds of the seats no easier for the bourgeois parties to attain. It was in fact likely that the 128,000 votes that had gone to the Communists in 1929 would go to the Social Democratic Party, given that no other workers' party was competing. The SDP already had a parliamentary group of 59 MPs, very close to the 67 which they needed to veto the anti-Communist bills permanently.

In the electoral campaign the Lapuans exerted maximum pressure on the parties and electors by means of several kinds of action. First, their political terrorism continued. Two weeks after the dissolution of the Parliament they kidnapped the Social Democratic leader and Deputy Speaker of the Eduskunta Vaino Hakkila, showing that they would not hesitate to attack the Social Democrats at the highest level in order to carry out their programs. The kidnappings of Communist and Social Democratic activists and local politicians went on throughout the whole summer, and the Svinhufvud government was obliged to appeal to the Lapua leaders to control their cohorts and to respect legality. Second, although the leaders of the Movement did not run for election because of their contempt for Parliament—although many lieutenants did run, mainly in the NC lists—they carried on with their intense propaganda activities. Kosola forced the managing director of the Finnish state radio service to grant him airtime to broadcast a public statement, in which he warned his listeners to abstain from criticizing the activities of the Lapua Movement. He warned the voters that the upcoming election would be the "last attempt" to destroy Communism through legal means, after which "more effective methods than balloting" would be used (quoted in Rintala 1962a, 182). A further course of action by Lapuans was the creation of "electoral committees" in the cities and local councils with the aim of "supervising the electoral lists," striking off the names of known Communist candidates. This patently illegal action of "forced disfranchisement" was carried out with impunity, waiting for the "ex post legalization" that would arrive after the approval of the anti-Communist bills, an obvious double-bind in that the Lapuans would only be able to make the practice "legal" by relying on such illegal measures to gain power in the first place. Finally, the Lapuans exerted pressure on the bourgeois parties to form a broad electoral alliance of all "White" forces, a solution also advocated by Svinhufvud and the bulk of the National Coalition party, while the Agrarians and the Progressives were decidedly cool about it. Thus, the all-"White" alliance was not formed at the national level, but only in some electoral districts. These scattered electoral alliances, however, favored to a slight

Table 6.4 Final Repression of the Finnish Communist Movement, 1929–1931

Defensive Measures	Status
Ban	Law of January 1930: reinforced governmental power to dissolve associations promoting "illegal or immoral" activity. 1930: SAJ was dissolved. Between 1930 and 1931 all Communist "public" groups and associations were dissolved.
Explicit electoral barriers	Law of November 1930 amending the Organic Law of the Chamber of Deputies: Communists declared ineligible for Parliament. Modification to electoral law of November 1930: Communists not permitted to present candidacies.
Electoral thresholds and biases	The existing biases of the d'Hondt system allowed the electoral alliances of bourgeois parties to win the necessary qualified majority in 1930 elections to pass special anti-extremist legislation.
Special anti-extremist legislation	Comprehensive system of legislation passed.
On institutional core	Law on the State of War of September 1930: exceptional powers to the president "to safeguard legal order." Law on the Protection of the Republic of November 1930: president can suspend constitutional rights "in case of immediate danger to the public order." Law of January 1931 on high treason
On public order	Law on the Protection of Peace in the Workplace of February 1931: repression of anti-"White" activities of Communist unions and organizations at the workplace
On propaganda	Laws of July 1930 on false news and libel: Government can suspend any publication that, according to its judgment, violates the Criminal Code
Other laws and administrative provisions	None
Use of state radio	Data not available.
Secret police repression	Intensified (see table 6.4) also thanks to the increased number of informers.

Table 6.4 Continued

Defensive Measures	Status
"Public" police repression	Wave of arrests against "public" members of Communist electoral associations continued. June 1930: Government suspends all Communist publications (no legal basis at that moment). July 1930: Government arrests all Communist MP (doubtful legal basis). July 1930: Government prevents all public gatherings of Communists (no legal basis at that moment).
Appeals to public opinion	No
Policy concessions	No
Creation of alternative organizations	No

but decisive extent the parties that formed them, and this had a very important impact on the overall political equilibrium. Thanks to the bias of the d'Hondt rule of seat allocation in favor of the bigger competitors, the bourgeois parties gained six seats more than they would have had without the alliances,[23] reaching the necessary two-thirds majority by only one seat (exactly 134 seats, while 66 went to the SDP). This allowed the passage of the anti-Communist legislation in November 1930 (Svinhufvud again posed the question of confidence to have the laws passed unamended)—and in all likelihood stopped the country from becoming involved in a new civil war.

The Crushing of Communism

In the end, the pressure exerted by the Lapua Movement on the government and the bourgeois parties led to the definitive repression of Finnish Communism. Table 6.4 summarizes the measures enacted against the Communist organizations in 1929–31.

As the table shows, the years 1929–31 can be seen as a sharp intensification of a strategy of repression against the Communists that had been typical of the Finnish governments during the previous decade. The novel element is that this happened through the endowment of the Finnish state with an extensive system of special anti-extremist legislation, which introduced severe restrictions on the rights to political participation and free expression and granted the executive—in particular the head of state—broad powers to deal with

emergency situations. On the basis of this legislation—and, as we have seen, in some circumstances even lacking such a basis—the Finnish government was then able to curb all "public" activity and the influence of the Communists both as an electoral organization and within the unions.

More specifically, on the basis of the Law on Associations of January 1930 the government was given wider powers to ban associations and any successor organizations. The power of the president, and of the executive in general, to respond to emergency situations—internal revolt was named explicitly—was successively widened with the laws on the State of War (26 September 1930) and the Law on the Protection of the Republic (18 November 1930).[24] In essence, with the modifications to the Constitution introduced by these laws, the president could suspend constitutional freedoms and guarantees if, and for as long as, he deemed it necessary to deal with a situation that he judged to constitute an internal emergency. Explicit disfranchisement of Communists was decreed with two of the laws approved in November 1930—the Communists were declared ineligible and prevented from presenting candidacies (the latter was, in technical terms, a "simple" modification to the electoral law). On 28 November 1930 modifications to the Criminal Code were introduced, expanding the definition of high treason and providing harsher penal sanctions for those who violated the law. The freedoms of the press and the right of free expression were limited with the law of July 1930, which gave the government wider powers to confiscate publications and introduced penalties for spreading false news and toughening those for libel on constitutional authorities. The government prohibited and closed down all Communist publications. To this very complex and detailed set of special laws must be added the "law on the protection of the workplace" of February 1931, which curbed the power of Communists in the unions.[25] (For a closer analysis of these special laws, see appendix C.) This law, as well as the ban on the SAJ discussed above, incorporated many of the specific demands of the Lapua Movement which sought to reduce the role of the unions (Erich 1932, 1933). At the same time, the stream of investigations and arrests of members of the underground Communist organization that had been typical of the 1920s increased.[26]

The Defense

Most of the special anti-extremist legislation passed in 1930–31 would prove important not only for the repression of the Communists and for the state's

endowment with the means deemed necessary to prevent their political rebirth, but also for the reaction in subsequent years against the Communists' opponents on the extreme right, as happened when Lapua, having secured the elimination of Communism, explicitly turned against democracy as such. Legislation alone, however, would not have been sufficient for an effective reaction against right-wing extremism: political factors, in particular the attitude of the bourgeois parties and the president, were to be crucial for that outcome. This section is devoted to the later rise and eventual fall of the Lapua Movement.

The Evolution of the Lapua Movement

After the October 1930 elections, the Lapua Movement put forward new and yet more extreme requests. In many sectors of the governing parties it was hoped that the passing of the anti-Communist bills would satisfy the requests of the Lapuans and counteract the Movement's influence on national politics. This expectation was wrong: far from being satisfied by the elimination of Communism, the Lapua Movement put forward ever more daring demands, such as the introduction of a plural vote for higher taxpayers, high protective tariffs, and so on. A systematic formulation of the new political goals of the Lapua Movement was presented in the "Tampere Program" of November 1931. The Movement argued for the outlawing of the Social Democratic Party, which it believed should be eliminated from the political life of the country because of its Marxist ideology. In order to achieve this, the Program declared that the Lapua Movement would not hesitate to destroy the power of the state should it come to the defense of the Social Democrats (Rintala 1965, 434; Kirby 1979).

Moreover, the Movement continued its practice of political violence: two weeks after the elections they kidnapped the former President Kaarlo Juho Ståhlberg and his wife, and the Lapua violence was decisive in forcing the election of Svinhufvud against Ståhlberg in February 1931.[27] The election of Svinhufvud to the presidency, however, would not guarantee the Lapua Movement the fulfillment of its more ambitious political goals, as the leaders of the Movement had planned.

The Attitude of the Bourgeois Parties

On the contrary: after the enactment of the anti-Communist legislation, most sectors of the bourgeois parties had little reason to tolerate the continuous disruptions of public order by the Lapua Movement and therefore turned away from it (in particular after the abduction of Ståhlberg), with the excep-

tion of the National Coalition, which continued to support the actions and aims of the Movement. Of particular importance is the change in the position of the Agrarian party, whose leadership turned decisively against the Movement towards the end of 1930. The Agrarians and the other moderate bourgeois forces correctly feared that attacking the Social Democratic Party, the largest Finnish party with a very broad following in the country, would have disastrous results for the nation's civil life and make democratic coexistence impossible. The concrete expression of the distancing of the center parties from Lapua and the NC was the reemergence of Ståhlberg as a candidate for the succession to Relander as president. His name was put forward for the election of the electoral college as early as January. (The Finnish president was elected by an electoral college of 300 members who were in turn elected by universal suffrage every six years with the same electoral system used for the election of Parliament.)

The project of reelecting Ståhlberg and shifting the political equilibrium of the country towards a more moderate position, however, failed: in the final ballot of what was certainly the most dramatic presidential election in Finland during the interwar years, Svinhufvud prevailed over Ståhlberg by 151 to 149 votes. In the previous ballots—an absolute majority was necessary, so only the top two candidates in the second round could compete in the third and final ballot—Svinhufvud's candidacy had been supported only by the NC and the internal right wing of the Swedish People's Party, while the representatives of the Social Democrats, the Progressives, and the rest of the Swedish People's Party had consistently voted for Ståhlberg. It was the votes of the 53 Agrarian representatives that tipped the balance in favor of Svinhufvud. In fact, the Agrarians were ready to support Ståhlberg, but immediately before the last ballot the leader of the Civil Guard, Lauri Malmberg—an important figure in the Lapua Movement—explicitly warned the Agrarian members of the electoral college that if Ståhlberg were elected, public order could not be guaranteed. Lapua members were out in force in the capital and appeared ready to unleash a bloodbath. The political temperature was so high that, on the eve of the elections, Svinhufvud suspended the Lapuan newspaper *Aktivisti,* edited by Kosola, the leader of the Movement, because in some articles it had clearly hinted that, should Ståhlberg be elected president, then he should be assassinated (Micheles Dean et al. 1934, 275; Kirby 1979, 89).

The consequences of Svinhufvud's elections were, however, very different from the expectations of the Lapua leaders: the new president turned out to be

not their ally but their enemy. Although in mid-1930, as he reentered active politics after a long retirement, Svinhufvud had been very supportive of the Lapua Movement, considering it an expression of healthy patriotic spirit, he had already assumed a more critical attitude in the months of his short tenure as prime minister. The first divergence between Svinhufvud and the Lapua Movement probably occurred as early as the March on Helsinki: as the marchers approached Helsinki, the cabinet issued an official condemnation of the "Law of Lapua," which prescribed the preservation of "White" Finland at all costs (see chapter 2). Moreover, in a meeting on the morning of 7 July, the day of the march, Svinhufvud asked the leader of Lapua to release two Communist MPs who had been kidnapped from Parliament a few days before (Rintala 1962b, 178). After the meeting, Svinhufvud let his cabinet participate in the public ceremonies following the march, thus concealing the conflict from the public. The distance between Svinhufvud and the Lapua Movement continued to increase in the following months. Immediately after the meeting of the new Parliament elected in October 1930, Svinhufvud admitted that the government had not repressed the widespread political violence and illegality because "this could have given rise to a civil war" and the government "preferred a policy of moral pressure" (Micheles Dean et al. 1934). The even more radical turn of the Movement and its plans for armed insurrection further widened the distance with Svinhufvud, a distance that the events of the presidential election of February 1931 did nothing to reduce.

The Repression of the Lapua Movement

In sum, after the watershed of the 1930 parliamentary elections the Lapua Movement and the majority of the "White" establishment found themselves increasingly on opposite sides of the barricades. The increasingly hostile attitude of the center parties towards the Lapua Movement showed clearly in the new government that took office after Svinhufvud took over the presidency on 1 March 1931. The prime ministership went to the Agrarian Juho Emil Sunila. He was supported by the same coalition that had supported Svinhufvud, but his cabinet was composed of figures much less sympathetic to the Lapua Movement than those of the previous cabinet. The new government set as one of their priorities the "absolute reestablishment of legality . . . and a resolute repression of all intrigues and attempts at extra-parliamentary excitation, from whatever source" (Micheles Dean et al. 1934, 275).

Meanwhile, the Sunila government started pulling the reins on the Lapua

Movement: for example, Minister of Justice Toivo Kivimäki used his influence to push the Supreme Court to convict General Wallenius for the abduction of Ståhlberg (he was later acquitted). The kidnapping of Socialist politicians and sympathizers occurred to a much lesser extent than in 1930. At this stage, suffering a loss of popularity in public opinion and the object of increasing hostility by the bourgeois establishment, the Lapua Movement planned an armed revolt. During 1931, a well-organized, army-like structure was quickly put into place, with a central staff in the town of Lapua. Sectors of the Civil Guard were closely involved in this operation (Micheles Dean et al. 1934; Rintala 1965). In February 1932, Kosola decided that the time for revolt was ripe: The prime minister was ill and several members of the cabinet were outside Helsinki. A few days earlier, the official newspaper of the Movement had called for a "Finnish Hitler" on its front page. On the occasion of a public speech by a Social Democratic MP, Lapua militants—mainly armed and uniformed Civil Guards—took over the small town of Mäntsäla, disarming the police. On 29 February the Lapua leaders sent a message to Svinhufvud demanding the removal of the minister of the interior and of the provincial governor, both of whom had firmly opposed the Movement in the past. The next day, the leaders of the revolt demanded the resignation of the entire cabinet and the appointment of a cabinet obedient to its will. To give extra weight to these requests, members of the Lapua Movement were mobilized in every important Finnish city, with their Civil Guard arms and uniforms, under the guidance of Wallenius.

At that moment, the country was again on the brink of civil war. In fact, not only had the Lapua Movement prepared for military confrontation, but the demand that the cabinet resign was also echoed by many influential right-wing associations, such as the Academic Karelia Society and the League of War Veterans. The commanding general of the Finnish army was informed that many of his officers, former *Jäger,* would not obey an order to advance against the Lapuans.[28] Two conservative members of the cabinet, both prominent in the Lapua Movement, resigned; their parliamentary bloc supported their decision. Even the National Progressive Minister of Justice (and future prime minister) Kivimäki agreed publicly with the view that the cabinet should resign (Rintala 1965, 433–34).

In this situation, the final decision rested with Svinhufvud, who on the day of the Mäntsäla uprising, learning that the Lapuans wanted to march on Helsinki, presided over a meeting with the cabinet, the Commanding General

of the Army Aarne Sihvo, the commander of the Civil Guard, and three other high-ranking military officers. In this meeting the president made clear his intention to stand firm against the revolt, and the armed forces finally pledged their loyalty. All the railways and roads to Helsinki were blocked and the army was assigned to protect the city. Soldiers on leave were ordered to report for duty. The following day Svinhufvud issued a decree declaring a state of emergency and, on the basis of the special legislation passed in 1930, suspended freedom of the press and assembly, freedom from arrest or search without warrant, and freedom of movement. Moreover, the government was empowered to control mail, telegraph, telephone, and radio communications. On 2 March, the Lapuans made a further public declaration, demanding that General Rudolf Walden, one of their leaders, be appointed prime minister, and Carl Gustaf Mannerheim commander in chief of the Armed Forces. (The latter request was a direct attack at Svinhufvud: according to the Constitution, only the president could be commander in chief during peacetime.) At this point, Svinhufvud appealed on the radio to the Civil Guards, using all of his political prestige and moral authority—he stressed that he was speaking in his capacity as supreme commander of the armed forces *and* of the Civil Guard—to remind them of their oath of allegiance to the republic and urged the rebels of Mäntsäla to return home. In return for this, he offered an amnesty to everyone but the leaders. This appeal, and the fact that defection from within the army had been brought under control, broke the Lapua front: the revolt was crushed on 6 March—that is, only a week after it had begun. Most of the Lapua leaders, including Kosola and Wallenius, were arrested, and the Movement was outlawed.

Svinhufvud's appeal to the Civil Guard was probably even more decisive in blocking the revolt than the finally obtained support of the Army. The Civil Guard was about four times bigger than the regular Finnish army (Karvonen 1999, 141) and enjoyed immense national prestige. For these reasons, it would have been very difficult to engage the army in a victorious military fight with the Civil Guard. While virtually all the Lapuans were members of the Civil Guard and while it was obvious that the Lapua leaders hoped to use the Guard as the military arm of the Movement, the Civil Guard was deeply divided internally on whether to follow the Lapua leaders in their plan to destroy the democratic regime in Finland, as the more right-wing Civil Guard officers and members wanted, or not, as the more moderate Guardsmen wanted. This led to strong internal disagreement in the Guard at all levels, until Svinhufvud's

appeal resolved the question in favor of those opposed to Lapua (Karvonen 1999, 154–55).

Thus, the crucial factors in the success of the suppression of the Mäntsäla Revolt were the attitudes of Svinhufvud and Sihvo in a political environment in which support for the Lapua Movement had, however, already decreased sharply. At any rate, the victory for democracy that was the consequence of the actions of these two figures was not their own personal victory. In essence, the president acted against the majority of his party, and the Chief of Staff acted against most of his officers. The majority of the National Coalition, in fact, still supported the Lapuans; the army officers, on the other hand, were divided, and there had been strong pressure on Sihvo from high-ranking officers to support the revolt. In fact, had Sihvo gone the other way and had the revolt succeeded, he would have been in a very strong position in the new regime. However, Sihvo remained loyal to Svinhufvud and the bulk of the army followed him. This led to resentment against both Svinhufvud and Sihvo, who after the repression were subject to strong personal attacks from the extreme right environment, the army, the right-wing press, and large sectors of the Civil Guard, so much so that Sihvo had to resign his position as early as January 1933. The same was true for most of those who had supported and fostered the repression (Rintala 1962b, 195). Table 6.5 summarizes the defensive measures enacted against the Lapua Movement.

The repression of the Lapua Movement in early 1932 was formally based on the so-called anti-Communist legislation passed in 1930–31. Although the preambles of the bills that the government presented to Parliament made explicit mention or clearly hinted at the anti-Communist purpose of the laws, the actual text of the legislation did not mention any specific ideology or political group, but rather referred to and declared illegal all threats against the fundamental institutions of the political system. The government was thus endowed with the legal means to defend democratic institutions against the attacks coming from the extreme right. However, the repression of the Mäntsäla revolt was not followed by a wave of severe prosecution and conviction of the individuals involved in the revolt. For example, Malmberg, head of the Civil Guard, was not removed from his position despite the heavy involvement of his organization in the revolt and his overt support. Svinhufvud technically had the power to remove him, but he refrained from doing so since the Guard would have opposed this decision. Neither was any major purge undertaken within the ranks of the Civil Guard. In general, the sentences handed down to the arrested rebels were milder than might have been expected: of the 116

Table 6.5 Final Repression against the Lapua Movement in 1932

Defensive Measures	Status
Ban	Movement outlawed after the Mäntsäla revolt
Explicit electoral barriers	Not applicable
Electoral thresholds and biases	Not applicable
Special anti-extremist legislation	Strong system passed in 1930–31. Partially implemented against Lapua in February–March 1932.
On institutional core	Presidential emergency powers implemented for repression and arrest of Lapua leaders
On public order	No further special legislation passed.
On propaganda	In 1931 Lapua newspaper *Aktivisti* shut down by government
Other laws and administrative provisions	None
Access to state radio	[In the first phase occasionally a resource for Lapuans. Kosola appealed to electorate not to hinder actions of Lapua Movement in campaign for elections October 1930.] Svinhufvud appeals to Civil Guards to abandon the revolt in March 1932.
Secret police repression	None
"Public" police repression	In general, mild before 1931 (many unpunished acts, trials with mild sentences). Leaders of Mäntsäla revolt arrested. Of the 116 arrested, 52 sentenced to prison terms, 32 suspended sentences (leaders) and 24 acquitted. No purge within Civil Guard.
Appeals to public opinion	None
Policy concessions	Wide until beginning of 1931 (outlawing of Communism and legal limitations on unions' freedom). None after beginning of 1931.
Creation of alternative organizations	Svinhufvud and his collaborators attempted to create a new organization to "regiment" the rank and file of the disbanded Lapua Movement, but they failed.

arrested, 52 were sentenced to prison terms of between two and thirty months, 32 were given suspended sentences (among them Kosola and Wallenius), 24 were acquitted, and 20 were given amnesty. (Micheles Dean et al. 1934, 277). Moreover, the Governor of Uusimaa province, Bruno Jalander, whose head the Lapua Movement had demanded first, was removed in July 1932 after an official request by the NC, on the grounds that this would "increase stability in the province." NC exponents also requested, this time without success, the resignation of the Minister of the Interior Ernst von Born, an important figure in the Swedish People's Party who had been an open enemy of the extreme right and another clear target of the revolt (Rintala 1962b, 196).

Thus, in a situation where the extreme right, although the object of governmental repression, was demonstrating some significant resilience, Svinhufvud tried to create a new all-inclusive right-wing movement that would be under his control and would continue the program of the Lapua Movement without endangering public order and the rule of law.[29] He wanted to emphasize educational means: "Even though they take more time, they will certainly lead in the end to definite results" (quoted in Rintala 1962b, 221). These were the founding ideals of the People's Patriotic Movement (IKL).

Svinhufvud was the driving force behind the IKL: he was involved personally and through his lieutenant Erkki Räikkönen in the meetings leading to the foundation of the movement. Less than three weeks after the suppression of the Mäntsäla insurrection there was a secret meeting of Svinhufvud and Räikkönen with two leaders of the Lapua Movement who had not been arrested, at which important representatives of the National Coalition were also present. In this meeting the first steps towards the foundation of the movement were taken and its basic principles were determined. However, less than one month after the founding convention, held on 10 April 1932, Svinhufvud's collaborators found themselves sidetracked and outnumbered, having completely lost control of their "creature." They left the IKL shortly afterwards, and the organization, which constituted itself into a political party, would constitute a further extreme right-wing challenge to Finnish democracy during the following few years, although of a less dangerous nature than the Lapua Movement.

A Note on the IKL

The new leadership decided to constitute the IKL as a political party of totalitarian and Nazi-like orientation. Although the IKL tried to broaden its appeal to workers, the party mainly found political sympathy in the constella-

tion of right-wing associations, in which party members became remarkably influential—or, rather, vice versa.[30] The IKL never became very big, but its political influence was significantly enhanced by its successful takeover of the much larger and more influential National Coalition party. In fact, since the party by-laws allowed IKL members and leaders to have multiple party affiliations, in 1932 IKL members managed to gain a majority within the governing bodies of the NC (see chapter 2). This, in turn, caused the resignation of other conservative politicians who opposed the extremist positions of the IKL, which obviously strengthened the extremist wing even further. Thus, after having been the main and most coherent parliamentary outlet for the Lapua Movement in 1929–32, the National Coalition now associated itself with, and was actually controlled by, the political successors of Lapua, the IKL. In the elections of 1933 the two parties forged an electoral alliance, which obtained 32 seats (18 NC candidates were elected, and 14 IKL), corresponding to 16 percent of the Eduskunta. This respectable size, however, never sparked any defections in the rest of the bourgeois bloc, in which the division between moderates (the Agrarians, the Progressives, and a majority of the Swedish People's Party) and right-wing radicals (a minority within the Swedish People's Party, and the National Coalition), already apparent a year earlier, was becoming more and more entrenched. The four-party coalition supporting Sunila fell apart in December 1932. Sunila was replaced by a minority cabinet led by Kivimäki, one that was unreservedly supported in Parliament only by the Progressive Party and the Swedish People's Party, and one that attracted support on different occasions either from the other bourgeois parties or the Social Democratic Party—both of which wanted to avoid the possibility of a NC/IKL minority government, which would have had the support of Svinhufvud.[31] Despite its shaky parliamentary basis, the Kivimäki government lasted until October 1936, making it the most enduring of the whole interwar period. After the defeat of the Lapua Movement, the time of adventures seemed to have passed, and the pole formed by National Coalition and the IKL became increasingly isolated by the rest of the bourgeois forces. On the contrary, the fluid parliamentary alignments of those years were the occasion for the reduction of the distance between the Social Democratic Party and the center parties—although while Svinhufvud remained president the appointment of Social Democrats to governmental posts was ruled out. At the same time, the NC-IKL alliance increasingly distanced itself from the rest of the bourgeois parties because of its extremist positions and because of the refusal of the IKL to form coalitions with "class-based" parties.

In this situation, forces within the National Coalition were working to emancipate the party from the strangling embrace of the IKL and to bring it back to its more traditional conservative political positions. This was the state of affairs when Juho Kusti Paasikivi decided to accept the offer of the Chair of the NC Executive Committee tendered by the traditional sectors of the party.[32] From that position he operated to reestablish orthodox conservatism in the NC and to eliminate the influence of the IKL. Thanks to his political ability and charisma, to the help he received from older party leaders such as Kyösti Haataja, and to his financial connections, Paasikivi's task was accomplished in three years, in time for the elections of 1936. At the party convention of November 1935 the NC resolutely rejected cooperation with the IKL and even entered the electoral campaign of the following year with a clear anti-IKL line, returning to classical conservatism while accusing the IKL of "fascism." The electorate rewarded this political line: the NC gained two seats in the 1936 elections, and a further five in the 1939 elections. As a result of Paasikivi's action, the NC turned its back on extremism and joined the democratic front; this turn—or return—to an orthodox democratic position did not, however, coincide with the party's regaining a role in government.[33]

The political "emancipation" of the NC from the IKL came at a time when the desire for direct participation of the Social Democratic Party in the national government in a coalition with the moderate center parties had ripened considerably. The defeat of the two parties formally supporting Kivimäki's cabinet and the victory of the Social Democrats in the elections of 1936 (see table 6.1) led to the resignation of the cabinet and opened the way to a new governmental formula (von Beyme 1970, 916). The Agrarians supported a coalition government including the Social Democrats and led by Kallio, but this project met with the opposition of Svinhufvud, who blocked it. Thus, Kallio was able to form only a minority cabinet with the support of the Progressives. The clash between Svinhufvud and the Agrarians led the latter to join forces with the Social Democrats in the presidential elections of February 1937 in opposition to Svinhufvud's reelection. Kallio himself was elected to the presidency, supported by a coalition of Agrarians, Social Democrats, NPP and a part of the Swedish People's Party, opening up a new period for Finnish democratic politics marked by the division of the "bourgeois" block, with the Agrarians and the Progressives allying with the Social Democrats on the one hand and the isolation of the right, whether conservative or extremist, on the other. The new government, led by Aimo Kaarlo Cajander (Progressives),

which took office immediately after Kallio's election, was supported by the Agrarians, Progressives, and Social Democrats. Together, these parties formed the largest majority (143 seats out of 200) yet seen in the Finnish Parliament.

Thus, if the NC and the IKL together could conceivably have constituted a potential concern for regime stability, after the political emancipation of the NC from its totalitarian neighbor and the formation of a solid "green-red" coalition in Parliament, the IKL alone did not constitute a significant threat to Finnish democracy. This did not, however, spare the party the enactment of repressive provisions.

In 1935, the government banned the youth organization of the IKL because of its participation in a right-wing coup in Estonia. For the same deed, legal proceedings were also instituted against the leaders of the Academic Karelia Society, many members of which had taken part in the expedition. The existence of a system of strong anti-extremist legislation and the precedents of the repression against the Communists and Lapuans ruled out the possibility that the IKL would indulge in political violence, as the Lapua Movement had done. The head of the party organization, Bruno Salmiala, was a professor of criminal law at Helsinki University, and his major function was to prevent any whisper of illegality by party affiliates (Rintala 1962b, 239). He was not successful in the case of the youth organization—which was, however, reconstituted under a different name shortly afterwards—but it must be said that in general the IKL's political actions were relatively respectful of legality.

Given the strength of the existing apparatus of anti-extremist legislation, under the Kivimäki cabinet the 1930 Law on Associations was amended in 1933 and 1934, and only one new piece of legislation was passed to counter the IKL: the "Blouse law" of 1934, which forbade the use of party uniforms. This law, which had parallel examples in many other democracies (see chapter 7), was triggered by the fact that the IKL had ordered its members, including MPs, to wear the black and blue party uniform. This was met with strong disapproval among the "bourgeois" public—not even the Communists had ever dared to do this in Parliament—and the government responded by supporting the bill. In November 1938 the minister of the interior—a young Urho Kekkonen, who after World War II would be president for 25 years—issued a decree based on the existing anti-extremist legislation that banned the IKL and shut down its newspapers and periodicals. The official motivation was that the IKL was a direct successor organization of the Lapua Movement, which sparked a lively debate. The courts, in the end, refused to uphold the ban, and the IKL was

readmitted to the political arena. However, even according to IKL sources, the ban had a negative effect on the organization of the party, especially at the local level (Rintala 1962b, 242). The electoral results of the party in the 1939 elections show that the ban did not make a "martyr" of the IKL, whose electoral support decreased. Support for the governmental majority, on the contrary, increased by four seats, thereby strengthening the foundations of Finnish parliamentary government. The Winter War with Soviet Russia would change the situation drastically (Nevakivi 1976).

Interwar Finnish democracy survived several challenges that could have brought it to breakdown. In stopping the takeover attempts of the extreme left and in particular of the extreme right, the Finnish incumbent elites resorted to repression more than accommodation (which was also tried in some instances but in general failed), but their countermeasures stopped short of destroying the democratic process, much as happened in Czechoslovakia during roughly in the same years. Their "militant democracy," in fact, allowed room for the (loyal) opposition, and was probably the lesser evil, in democratic terms, in a situation in which the rising Lapua Movement came very close to doing away with democracy altogether. Repression was particularly used against the Communists, first in the form of police actions during the 1920s and then through the passing and implementation of strong anti-extremist legislation in 1930–31, which led to the elimination of the Communists from the political scene. The governmental repression and the intransigent attitude of the Social Democrats probably helped each other during the 1920s: continuous harassment and prosecution probably contributed to thwart the Communists' efforts to subtract support to the Social Democrats within the working class. At the same time, the clear distancing of the Social Democrats from radical positions made repression viable and less costly than it could have otherwise been in a country in which the memory of the Civil War that had divided the population between "Reds" and "Whites" was still very vivid. If the determination of the Communists to influence and control all organizations of the working class did not give rise to temptations of defection from prodemocracy positions by the Social Democratic Party, the emergence of the Lapua Movement in 1929 was instead seen by some in the "White" front as an opportunity to reinforce the hegemony of the "White" majority on the country. This was not only true of the National Coalition party, which was effectively the most coherent parliamentary outlet of the Lapuans, but also of some sectors of the more moderate

bourgeois parties. These, however, became quickly aware that the Movement was not controllable and soon took their distance from it as much as possible given a situation in which, for a few months, the Lapuans seemed to be the arbiters of the political destiny of the country. Even Svinhufvud, who had overtly backed the Movement in its early phase, grew increasingly concerned about the damage that Lapua could do to Finnish public life. As explained above, Svinhufvud's skepticism towards Lapua started emerging before his election to the presidency, for which he could still obtain the decisive support of the Movement *against* the majority of the "White" establishment. His election possibly saved Finland from another Civil War, and almost certainly from democratic breakdown. After his election, the new government started pulling the reins on the Movement until the final crackdown in Mäntsäla in 1932. Svinhufvud's actions can therefore be seen as a successful attempt of incumbent elites to use an emerging extreme right-wing movement and not to be used by it. He did not manage to fulfill his political plans in full, as the failure of a "domesticated" IKL after Lapua's disbandment testifies, and many of his supporters, including his party National Coalition (in which, however, Svinhufvud had always kept an independent position), were in the end politically marginalized, for different reasons, over the following years. Yet the indirect and in large part unintentional consequence of his success against Lapua was to allow for the rebirth of a normal democratic dialectic after two years of political chaos, which would even lead to a change of government involving the final political integration of his fierce adversaries, the Social Democrats. All of this meant the establishment of a new stability for Finnish democracy in the second half of the 1930s, exactly when many European states had fallen under autocratic rule and the few remaining democracies had to confront strong extremist challenges (Kaukianen 1984).

The IKL challenge was probably deemed to be less dangerous than Lapua's from the start, for several reasons, including the change of mood in the bourgeois establishment after 1931, the existence of strong—and recently implemented—anti-extremist legislation, and the restored political order after the wave of violence in 1929–32. But even here, we must register the success of another member of the establishment, Paasikivi, who managed to remove the National Coalition party from the influence of the totalitarian IKL, so that after 1935 the NC-IKL pole was dissolved and the extreme right wing ceased to be a relevant threat. Rustow's observation that "democracy need not be built by people who are truly democrats" applies not only to the transition to

democracy but also to the defense of it, and thus also certainly applies to the actions of Svinhufvud and Paasikivi against the extreme right wing (Rustow 1970, 344).

Successful elite projects in reaction to extremism and in favor of democratic stability, such as those that we have analyzed in Czechoslovakia, Belgium, and Finland were not bound to succeed: in other countries where strong anti-system parties threatened democracy and brought disarray in the democratic camp, democratic incumbents were defeated in their fight against extremism. It is now time to take stock and to put our cases into a broader comparative framework, the subject of next chapter.

CHAPTER SEVEN

Defense of Democracy

Actors and Strategies in Comparative Perspective

> We must emphasize the importance of defining the disloyal opposition clearly and at some stages isolating it politically, but this process can be successful only if there is concomitant readiness to incorporate into the system those who are perceived as at least semi-loyal by some sectors of the regime-building coalition. Statesmanship, flexibility, and timing are badly needed at this stage, because the process of incorporation, which does not always represent a gain in efficacy, can be very important in the process of legitimization of an open, competitive system.
>
> —JUAN J. LINZ, "CRISIS, BREAKDOWN AND REEQUILIBRATION"

Defending democracy from its internal enemies is more difficult than any other form of government. To start with, democratic governments need to respect basic guarantees and rights, which substantially limits their space for maneuver: although civil and political rights were often, both de jure and de facto, restricted in the cases analyzed so far, they were never fully abolished. The main difficulty, though, is that in order for effective strategies of defense to be put in place while substantially respecting the existing constitutional framework, agreement on this objective from a sufficiently high proportion of the democratically minded forces is necessary, agreement that is all the more difficult to reach when antisystem forces are strong. As explained in the first chapters, the emergence of strong antisystem parties has a twofold negative effect on the stability of democracy: first, it embodies an ideological challenge that reduces the system's legitimacy; second, it makes coordination and cooperation among prosystem forces more difficult. The latter is the consequence of the "relational anti-systemness" of large ideologically extremist parties: their size combined with their adoption of aggressive propaganda tactics influence the dynamics of the party system, in which centrifugal tendencies prevail in the

electoral competition (Sartori 1976). The prevalence of centrifugal drives in the electoral arena can then transfer to the parliamentary arena, triggering the emergence of projects of political reaggregation that involve sectors of the governing majority. Those projects have the declared goal of changing the existing coalition alignments, dividing the political center, and shifting the general political equilibrium towards one of the extremes. They generally find fertile ground given the very characteristics of polarized party systems: center-based, fragmented, and ideologically diverse ruling coalitions are in fact the direct consequence of the systematic exclusion from government of large anti-system parties. Such coalitions are particularly vulnerable to the defection of some of their members: the parties composing them normally have to reach difficult compromises on policy preferences and office share, which in turn makes them more vulnerable to electoral losses to opposition parties. And we have seen how, in the countries analyzed so far, significant sectors of the parties most exposed to the electoral aggression of the strongest antisystem actors have attempted to defect from the government, seriously endangering its stability in very delicate moments of the crisis. Their plans could be stopped only thanks to the determined action of centrist forces (within the same parties and within the coalition) that prevented them from dragging the whole party to "defectionist" positions. This result, normally achieved at a high political cost, is a necessary condition for defending the regime through the implementation of ad hoc anti-extremist strategies.

This chapter takes stock of the analysis of the responses to political crises in Czechoslovakia, Belgium, and Finland, and compares those cases to the political dynamics leading to democratic breakdown in Italy during the 1920s and in Germany during the 1930s. These countries, which constitute the two examples in interwar Europe of "takeover" of a democratic system by an antisystem party, underwent political crises that were not intrinsically different from those experienced by the three most difficult cases of democratic survival analyzed so far. The analysis of Italy and Germany (which will be more succinct than that of the survival cases, as these developments are better known) constitutes the "mirroring" experience of what we have seen so far: just as "right" choices by incumbent elites were probably decisive in saving democracy from collapse in Czechoslovakia, Belgium, and Finland, by the same token "wrong" choices of actors in the same positions have certainly contributed to weakening the defense against extremism, thus pushing democracy towards breakdown in Italy and Germany.

The comparison between the cases of difficult democratic survival and those of breakdown via takeover emphasizes even more the difference between "partisan" versus "systemic" behavior of pivotal actors. The logic of party interplay—that is, the rewarding partisan tactics—typical of polarized systems tells us that the former is what we should expect according to the theory, if we keep in mind that electoral drives (on which Sartori's original theory focuses most) transfer into the coalition-making arena, where the strategies of border parties and their factions can be driven by office- or policy-based preferences as well as the incentive to maximize vote share (Strøm 1990; Strøm and Müller 1999). Interwar Italy and Germany as well as several other cases substantiate this claim empirically (on the other cases, see Sartori 1966, 1976). To be sure, the polarized pluralism model does not predict that democracies with polarized party systems are "bound" to break down: the theory only makes probabilistic claims, thus leaving space for actors to intervene and affect outcomes. Rather, the comparison of survivals and breakdowns in the light of this theory highlights that key actors might follow the propensities of party interplay, but also, in some cases, go *against* the flow. In other words, actors can act "countercausally": what Luebbert calls the "tragedy and irony of democratic politics" (Luebbert 1991, 311), namely democratic breakdown being favored by the propensity of party leaders to maximize their share of power via electoral support and thus try to win the consensus of different social strata does not always play out as expected. Political actors don't always act in a partisan way, even (or particularly) in a regime crisis.

Projects of Political Reaggregation

Similar to the well-known cases of democratic breakdown in interwar Italy and Germany, in all the countries analyzed so far, democracy suffered from a strong extreme right challenge.[1] However, between the voters' orientations on the one hand and the regime outcome on the other, there is the crucial step of the (re-)aggregation of what Linz, borrowing from the field of economics, calls "the political supply . . . a normal process in parliamentary democracies" (Linz 1978a, 67). The outcome of the political crises in the cases analyzed here cannot in fact be explained with exclusive reference to social dynamics—what, continuing the economic analogy, might be called the "political demand." What mattered was the way in which the political and institutional actors responded to the actual or perceived social demands that emerged during the crisis and

translated them into political strategies, in particular with respect to cooperation or defection from the center. The analysis of the political developments in Belgium, Czechoslovakia, and Finland has highlighted the importance of this process in determining the outcome of the crisis, in particular the role that incumbent political elites play in making democracy survive. The reactions of the "border" parties to the rise of extremists are key in allowing the executive to achieve the necessary stability and accrue the necessary political backing to respond to extremists. The analysis of the internal clash between "defectionist" and "governmental" factions in those parties has shown how difficult it was to maintain stability and how alternative paths were available and were pursued by substantial political actors. Finally, the national executive (the government and the head of state) has emerged as playing a crucial role in devising and enacting short-term reactions against extremists. The crises in Italy and Germany were characterized by similar dynamics, in the early phases, but the reactions of the incumbents were different, and this difference played a crucial role in pushing democracy towards breakdown and allowing the extremists to reach their final victory.

This section analyzes the dynamics of the aggregation of political supply in our cases of both survival and breakdown, starting with the emergence of the projects of political reaggregation supported by the defectionist factions of the center and continuing with the reactions of the border parties and the head of state to such projects. Table 7.1 summarizes the projects of political reaggregation, concentrating, for the sake of coherence of analysis, on those triggered by the emergence of extreme right-wing challenges.

As the historical analysis in the previous chapters has shown, the "uncomfortable" feelings of the "border" parties in the existing governing coalitions are normally at the basis of the cultivation of alternative political projects. In Belgium, the leaders of the traditionalist wing in the Catholic Party, feeling underrepresented in the cabinet, endeavored to realign the Belgian Catholics in a different alliance, which would have included Rex and VNV, recent winners in the elections, and excluded the Socialists. In Czechoslovakia, the internal right wing of the Czechoslovak Agrarians had grown increasingly dissatisfied with the policies of the government, which they considered as leaning too far to the left. Thus, this political faction started pursuing the project of shifting the political equilibrium towards the right, incorporating the new *Sudetendeutsche Heimatsfront* and exploiting the Sudeten German Agrarians' concern over electoral losses. During 1934, therefore, the Agrarian right wing vetoed a

Table 7.1 Defections from the Center in Five European Democracies

Country	Main Challenge	"Defector"	Political Project
Belgium	Rexists (1936–39)	Internal right wing of Catholic Party	To create a "right wing concentration," including Rex and excluding the Socialists
Czechoslovakia	Sudeten German Party (1933–38)	Internal right wing of Czechoslovak and Sudeten German Agrarians	To include the SdP in an anti-Socialist, anti-Masaryk coalition
Finland	Lapua Movement/ NC (1929–32)	Agrarian Party and other sectors of the "White" majority (until 1930)	Any projects exploiting Lapua for other ends rapidly prove impossible; established moderate parties have to follow the extremist tide.
Italy	Fascist National Party (1919–25)	Giolitti's and other moderate Liberal groups (1921)	To bring the Fascists into Parliament in order to eliminate veto power of the Catholics (PPI)
Germany	Nazi Party (1930–33)	Catholics and Liberals (1930)	The *Zentrum* and the DVP defect from the Great Coalition in favor of "presidential government" in 1930.

ban on the SHF—a course of action which was instead supported by large sectors of the governmental majority—with the expressed intention of "letting the party obtain 15 or 20 seats" in the elections of May 1935. This, together with the inclusion of the smaller Czech Fascists and the Conservatives, would have made it possible to form an anti-left coalition that would get rid of the Socialist parties, exclude from power the forces gathered around President Masaryk, and shift the political equilibrium of the country strongly to the right.

In Finland, projects to use the dynamism of the Lapua Movement in order to reinforce the domination of the "White" forces in the country emerged as soon as the Movement was formed, but they were quickly overcome by the strength and the aggressiveness of the Movement itself, which simply would

not serve the goals of others. The Agrarian Party's move to the right in 1930–31 was not due to the pursuit of a political project intended to shift the general political equilibrium, but rather to the desire to use the dynamism of Lapua to consolidate the grip of the "White" parties on Finnish society and political life. This quickly gave way to the more pressing imperative of keeping in touch with its own rank and file, attracted in large numbers by the Lapua Movement, and often directly involved in the movement's actions. In the difficult situation of the country at that moment, the Agrarian leadership would probably have been swept away, or at least lost large parts of its electorate to NC, if it had insisted on trying to control or put itself in the way of the Movement, as Kallio had tried to do during his last months as prime minister in 1930.[2] However, although with some partial peculiarities, the familiar pattern whereby non-defection leads to democratic survival is present here also. This logic emerged as soon as it was politically possible—early 1931—for the Agrarians and other moderate "White" forces to distance themselves from the radical positions of the National Coalition without causing Lapua to react by provoking a civil war. This increasingly isolated the extreme right from the rest of the bourgeois bloc, which, together with Svinhufvud's resolve to react promptly to Lapua's armed insurrection in 1932, was key for the survival of Finnish democracy against a challenge that could have swept it away.

The projects for political reaggregation in play during the political crises in the cases of breakdown are not substantially different from those emerged in the cases of survival. The political strategies of the moderate forces in the Italian Parliament played an important role in favoring Mussolini's rise to power in the political crisis of the early 1920s. The 1919 elections, the first to be held with a system of proportional representation (PR), had already marked a clear discontinuity in the hegemony of the Liberal forces typical of the prewar years, and had returned a lower chamber in which the Socialist Party (Socialist Italian Workers' Party—*Partito Socialista dei Lavoratori Italiani,* PSLI) was the largest party, with 156 seats, and the newly founded Catholic-oriented Italian Popular Party (*Partito Popolare Italiano,* PPI) was the second strongest party with 100 MPs and played a pivotal role. In the new arrangement of parliamentary forces after the elections of 1919, the government, led by the Liberal politician Francesco Saverio Nitti and resting mainly on the support of various sectors of the Liberal constellation, had to seek the support of the PPI, as no other coalitions were politically possible at that moment. This made the governmental majority too heterogeneous and the government too weak to cope when large strikes and political unrest spreading throughout the country and

the conflict between workers and industrialists assumed a harsher tone. Catholics and Liberals were divided by important issues such as—to name only two—the anticlericalism of many Liberals and the problem of local autonomy, supported by the Catholics and strongly opposed by the Liberals.

In general terms, the fluidity and fragmentation of the Liberal groupings, which were linked to single personalities and cliques and not part of a modern party structure, rendered it difficult for the established democratic forces to achieve the necessary coordination to react to the rising Fascists (Vivarelli 1967; Galli 1974). Within the Liberal political area, which included the remnants of the prewar Italian political elites, several political tendencies were present, from right-wing conservatives to center-left "radicals." Most decisive in these early years of the crisis was the attitude of the centrist Liberal groups gathering around the old statesman Giovanni Giolitti. Giolitti and other Liberal leaders of moderate tendency, finding it increasingly difficult to form a stable alliance with the PPI after 1919, decided to look to the emerging Fascists as a potential alliance partner (Della Porta 1957). The alliance between Liberals and Fascists at the national level was preceded by similar alliances for the local elections of October 1920. The alliance in question also corresponded to the precise strategy of Benito Mussolini, whose *Fasci di Combattimento* had not obtained any seats in the 1919 elections, despite the PR electoral system. The alliance with the Liberals at the national level sealed the first decisive success of this strategy. Giolitti, who had replaced Francesco Nitti as prime minister, called new national elections and sponsored the inclusion of the Fascists in common electoral lists with the Liberals (called "National Blocs") in the elections of 1921. The goal of Giolitti and the other Liberal leaders supporting this strategy was to weaken the Socialists—whose installations were subject at the time to widespread Fascist political violence which was largely tolerated by the authorities—and reduce the veto power of the PPI, with which a political alliance had proved arduous.[3] The elections did not go as Giolitti had expected, though, and the new Parliament would prove even less manageable than the previous one.

Before delving further into the analysis of the Italian crisis in the next section, let us look at the analogous developments in Germany, where the process that led ultimately to Hitler's takeover in 1933 was preceded by the crisis of 1930, when the cabinet began to govern on the basis of presidential decrees, without the support of a parliamentary majority. By 1933, when the intrigues and conflicts within the conservative establishment led it to relinquish power to Hitler, parliamentary government had already suffered the heavy blows of

the results of the elections held in 1930, and particularly in July and November 1932, and was practically dead. In 1930, the "Great Coalition" supporting the cabinet headed by the Social Democratic politician Hermann Müller entered what would prove an irreversible crisis and broke up.[4] In this period, we can distinguish the usual pattern of some moderate sectors pursuing a "defectionist" political project against a center-based government. The peculiarity of Weimar is that, in this initial phase, the goal of these forces was not the construction of a different political coalition featuring an extremist party, but rather an "institutional coalition" with the head of state, an arrangement made possible by the latter's ability—granted by article 48 of the Constitution—to govern without the support of Parliament. The result for the center-right defectionist forces would have been equivalent to the other cases in which an actual coalition with the extremists was sought: the ability to govern without having to negotiate every policy with heterogeneous coalition partners, in this case the Social Democrats.

In January 1930, two months before the fall of the Müller cabinet, the *Zentrum* party and the right wing of the *Deutsche Volkspartei* (DVP) had already started pursuing the objective of bringing the fiscal policy of the government towards their positions and away from those of the Social Democrats. A new coalition in Parliament including the right-wing parties was not viable at that time: the conservative *Deutsche Nationale Volkspartei* (DNVP) had been politically distant from the centrist parties since its extremist turn in 1928, as was the NSDAP, which, having only 2.8 percent of the seats, did not even potentially constitute a useful partner for the realization of their political projects at that stage. However, the centrist parties had the support of President Paul von Hindenburg, who agreed use his decree powers to support the eventual minority government that emerged after the break between them and the SPD. At the end of the month, the parliamentary group of the *Zentrum* officially expressed support for this strategy. At the beginning of March, the leader of the group, Heinrich Brüning, had several meetings with Hindenburg in which this strategy was discussed. At the end of these meetings, the political project of the centrists and the head of state was made public.[5]

In other words, the moderate forces represented by Brüning, finding themselves ill at ease in coalition with the SPD, could pursue a defectionist project thanks to the political support of the president who, by virtue of his decree powers, could allow them to govern without the support of a parliamentary majority. By making this strategy known publicly before breaking the coalition with the SPD, they hoped to force the political "tolerance" of the SPD for their

policy preferences. That is, with the support of Hindenburg for a minority government, they could negotiate with the SPD from a position of strength. The conflict over fiscal policy, however, despite all attempts to find a compromise, could not be resolved, leading to the fall of the Great Coalition cabinet (Huber 1981, 721–24).[6]

Hindenburg appointed Brüning as the new Chancellor, and the *Zentrum* politician would be an important figure during this most tormented phase of the Weimar Republic. In the first phase of his minority government, supported by the *Zentrum,* the DDP, the DVP, the BVP, and smaller conservative groupings, Brüning hoped to have the external support of the SPD in every case in which this was possible, and to rely on the Presidency only for the cases in which he could not have the support of a majority of the Reichstag. At first, the SPD refused such "tolerance" and supported two motions of no confidence in the government, which were, however, rejected thanks to the moderate wing of the conservative DNVP's support of Brüning.[7] In the summer, the clash between Parliament and the cabinet led Hindenburg to dissolve the Reichstag and to call elections for September 1930, which would constitute a watershed moment in the crisis.[8] These elections, in fact, did not have the result of reinforcing the governing parties—on the contrary, they saw the clear victory of the extremist parties and the defeat of the forces supporting Brüning.[9] Thus, both the Italian moderate Liberals around Giolitti and the center-right German groups following Brüning unwittingly contributed to the demise of democracy in their respective countries. This is not to pretend that there were no important differences between the two statesmen: for example, Giolitti's personal preference was probably to restore parliamentary government, while it is now known that Brüning was deeply skeptical about this (Brüning 1970): what matters here is that each misread the political situation within his country at a crucial moment, which would prove fatal for the destiny of democracy.

The Responses of the Incumbent Elites

The Interplay of Political Forces: Blockages and Failures of the Reaggregation Projects

In none of the cases analyzed in this book did the "reaggregation" projects succeed in the end: either they were blocked by counterforces pushing the political equilibrium towards a democratic solution, or they failed—that is to say, after a temporary success, the extremist party then slipped out of the

control of the more centrist faction seeking to use it, who then found itself sidetracked, thus giving the system a decisive push towards breakdown. The internal majority of the Belgian Catholic Party under the leadership of Pierlot resisted the temptation to recover the votes lost to Rex and VNV by moving to the right and sabotaging the government, as minority groups within the party proposed to do: instead it remained loyal to a centrist alliance with the Liberals and the Socialists. This strategy made it possible for the government to react effectively against the challenges mounted by Degrelle and his allies, and finally to defeat Rex in an open confrontation. After the electoral defeat of Degrelle in direct competition with Prime Minister van Zeeland in 1937, there were still some attempts by the leaders of the right-wing minority in the Catholic Party to form an alliance with Rex, but at that stage it was relatively easy for the party's leadership to reabsorb the protagonists into the mainstream of the party and force them to abandon their projects. The defectionist tendencies—that is, those supporting an alliance with Henlein—in the Czechoslovak and the Sudeten German Agrarian Parties constituted a serious concern for the democratic forces of Czechoslovakia in 1934–38. The creation of a new right-wing political equilibrium in Czechoslovakia was avoided until the Munich crisis, mainly thanks to the cohesion of the democratic forces around the ironclad political pact between Beneš and Hodža. In Finland, the reestablishment of political equilibrium after the repression of Lapua's armed insurrection in February 1932 was possible because the Agrarian Party and other important sectors of the "White" majority had recovered their traditional centrist position before the insurrection. Political and personal attacks by the National Coalition against those who had ordered and supported the repression of Lapua could therefore be contained, along with their destabilizing effect on the national political equilibrium in 1932–33.

The situation was different in the cases of breakdown. In Italy, the mistakes leading to the more fragmented and diverse Parliament of 1921 were not corrected by the political center after those elections. The situation became increasingly critical, and the incumbents did not take advantage of the electoral cycle to try to reach some form of agreement that could defend the regime from the Fascists. Although new elections were potentially far off in the future and several different democratic alliances were proposed, the center forces could not overcome their internal differences. Nor did the king favor such a solution, or even some form of partial emergency rule that could temporarily enable the government to react to extremists and restore parliamentary gov-

ernment at a later stage. Let us proceed in order: as mentioned, the result of the Italian elections of 1921 was different from what the Liberal leaders flirting with the Fascists had hoped: the losses of the working-class parties were limited,and the number of seats taken by the PPI even rose from 100 to 108 MPs.[10] The "National Blocs" (electoral alliances) of Liberals and Fascists, variously combined in the different electoral districts, obtained 265 seats in all. Of these, 35 were Fascists, 10 Nationalists (an extreme right-wing group that would later merge with the Fascist National Party), and the remaining 220 were divided among the various liberal and conservative groups. Thus, instead of the Fascist votes shoring up the declining electoral fortunes of the liberal groups, as the old Liberal elites had expected, what emerged after these elections was a right-wing pole (Fascists and Nationalists) strong enough that it could easily be used for other purposes, but also attractive to the most right-wing liberal groupings. Thus, the new Parliament was actually harder for Giolitti and the other moderate leaders to manage by employing their usual parliamentary tactics, and the formation of a stable majority was even more difficult than before. This situation, in which the Fascists were continuing to exert widespread violence in the country,and at the same time had gained significant parliamentary representation, was to precipitate a crisis within the following year.[11]

The new government appointed after the elections was led by the center-left Liberal politician Ivanoe Bonomi and received parliamentary support from all political forces except the Socialists, the Communists, and the Fascists. However, the new government did not take up a position against the Fascists. On the contrary, Bonomi tried to restore public order by favoring an agreement between Fascists and Socialists (*patto di pacificazione,* "pacification agreement"). This move was meant to restore public order, but it was also a desperate attempt to incorporate the Fascist movement in the establishment and thereby control it.[12] Again, the attempt failed, since the "patto" remained largely a paper measure only. Attempts to unify all Liberals of moderate orientation in a single parliamentary group also failed, and the divisions between the various Liberal groups brought the Bonomi government to collapse in February 1922.[13] This caused a cabinet crisis that lasted about a month, during which three attempts by liberal leaders to form a government failed, while a PPI leader turned down an appointment as *formateur.*[14] The conservative groups, in which the most eminent figure was former Prime Minister Antonio Salandra, vetoed the exclusion of the Fascists from any government majority, thus hindering the formation of a government of opposition to Fascism and

making an already difficult task virtually impossible. The conservative agrarian MPs adopted a similar position (Rossi 1955). In the end, equilibrium was found in a "provisional" solution: a second-tier figure from the ranks of the Giolitti group, Luigi Facta, was appointed prime minister, with the external support of the Fascists; only the Socialists and Communists opposed. The new, larger majority could not, however, prevent the internal paralysis of the government, which was unable to manage a situation in which Fascist violence was making the country increasingly ungovernable.

"Constitutionalizing Fascism" became an increasingly urgent political imperative for most politicians of Liberal and moderate tendency: the widespread violence exerted by Fascist squads throughout the country, which found informal support in military and police circles, and the parallel inability of the government to react to it, had in fact convinced large sectors of the political establishment that, however risky, Fascism and its leader had to be brought within government in order to be controlled. Moreover, in the crucial summer of 1922 all indicators pointed to a further rise in the support for the Fascist movement: from June to September of that year, membership of the PNF rose from about 450,000 to 700,000 members, while the movement expanded in the south of the country, where it had been mostly absent (De Felice 1966, 288).

At that stage, Mussolini could openly blackmail the established political forces by saying that the Fascist movement was ready to go back to legality but would provoke an insurrection if the government took an anti-Fascist attitude. In July 1922, new acts of political violence provoked the fall of the Facta cabinet (Galati 1966; Pratt Howard 1957). During the following crisis, the project of a center-left government, at that stage probably the only theoretical possibility within Parliament of reacting against the seemingly unstoppable Fascist violence, failed due to the reciprocal vetoes of the Socialists, the PPI, and the centrist Liberals. The moderate faction of the PSI expressed itself officially in favor of this solution, but the radical (*massimalista*) majority of the party blocked the proposal (Candeloro 1978, 393).[15] In order to maintain the balance between its various internal tendencies and to reassure its more traditionalist component, the PPI took a position in favor of a government without the Socialists.[16] A fragile equilibrium was eventually reestablished on the basis of a second Facta government, formed on the same political basis as the previous one—that is, it was not anti-Fascist.

In the few decisive months that followed, Mussolini played the ambitions and rivalries of the different Liberal and centrist leaders against each other,

shrewdly using them to fulfill his plans to attain power. Mussolini's main concern at that stage was Giolitti, the only figure from the Liberal front that had sufficient prestige and influence to get in the way of Fascism's march to power. Mussolini shrewdly exploited Facta's naïve personal ambition to be the one who managed to "constitutionalize" Fascism, which would have earned him the prestige and the reputation of a national leader. Alternating attacks against the government in public with moderation and negotiations behind the scenes, Mussolini let Facta believe that he would second his plans when the decisive moment came. With this skillful two-track tactic, Mussolini managed to block a possible return of Giolitti to power and to screen out, through Facta, any possible hindrances to his plans that could have come from King Vittorio Emanuele III, who was not favorably inclined towards Fascism. In fact, throughout the last months preceding the March on Rome of 28 October 1922, Facta frequently reported to the king the critical situation of the country—in which Fascist violence was continuing and the rumors of the preparation of a Fascist march on the capital city were spreading—in relatively optimistic terms, driven as he was by a false reading of the situation, that he could successfully conclude his bargain with Mussolini, on the basis of which Facta himself would have formed a new government in which the Fascists would exchange their support for a handful of portfolios (De Felice 1966, 314, 338–39).

The divisions within the democratic front, which did not allow for the creation of a more resolute government, the noninterventionism of the king, and Facta's mistaken interpretation created a stalemate that offered little resistance to the Fascist attack on the regime. For example, at the beginning of October 1922, the Fascist party formally reorganized its own militia, creating a de facto Fascist army. This was in obvious preparation for the march—but the government did nothing.[17] In the same days, Fascist squads militarily occupied the provinces of Trento and Bolzano, recently annexed to Italy from the Habsburg Empire, wresting power from the hands of the provisional administration still governing those areas since the end of World War I. Again, the government did nothing. These were the last blows to the remaining prestige and authority of the government. At that stage, the only last resort could have been an intervention of the king and the army in defense of the system, but that would not come either.

In Germany, after the elections of September 1930, none of the three coalition formulae previously tried could count on a majority of seats. The "Wei-

marer Koalition" with the *Zentrum,* the moderate left-wing liberal DDP, and the SPD would only have 231 seats, with 289 required for a majority. A "bourgeois" coalition ranging from the DNVP (which had recently radicalized) to the DDP, including *Zentrum,* BVP, and DVP, and the smaller conservative parties, had only 250, and a Great Coalition like the one supporting Müller, only 280. Moreover, none of the three coalition formulae was politically viable at that moment, given the reciprocal vetoes of SPD and DVP on the one hand and of DNVP and DDP on the other. The only coalition that would have had the necessary majority would have been a Great Coalition enlarged to include the smaller conservative groupings (which had emerged from the election in greater strength), but this would not have been acceptable at all to the powerful internal left wing of the SPD (Huber 1981, 781). Thus, a situation not dissimilar to that of Italy in 1921–22 characterized the German Reichstag after 1930. The main difference vis-à-vis the Italian situation is the special decree powers that the Weimar Constitution granted to the president allowing Brüning and his successors to govern with the support of Hindenburg—until Hitler's takeover.

In the two years of Brüning's government, until mid-1932, the Reichstag was convened only for short periods, while the center of power shifted increasingly from the Parliament and the parties towards the presidency (Bracher 1972). Many authors are inclined to see the possibility of the reestablishment of parliamentary rule and of the influence of democratic parties during the two years of Brüning's chancellorship (e.g., Bracher 1953; Matthias 1966; Lepsius 1978; see also Kershaw 1990). After the elections of July 1932, in which the extreme parties obtained a "negative majority" in the Reichstag, no democratic solution was any longer possible, even from a purely numerical viewpoint. However, the strategic mistakes and the political inadequacy of—among others—President Hindenburg and his advisers rendered the situation increasingly unstable (e.g., Turner 1996). Their response to the deterioration of the internal situation—street disorder and political violence, rising unemployment, the 1931 banking crisis—was to try on several occasions to include the Nazis in government, usually against the will of the prime minister. The contradiction of the two years of Brüning's chancellorship can be summed up in this way: a weak and inadequate president was subject to the influence of his advisers, who dragged him towards a different political plan than that pursued by the cabinet; the cabinet, for its part, was supposed to rely on the support of the president, since a parliamentary majority was no longer available. The choice that the advisers of the president made in finding a *modus vivendi* with

the NSDAP as a way out of the crisis, one that misunderstood the nature and the real goals of that party, is one of the political mistakes that led Germany into totalitarianism.

Having the possibility of a constitutional "emergency government" could in theory have been a resource for the system, in that it could have allowed the democratic forces the time to find a difficult agreement and restore normal parliamentary dynamics. This did not, however, help the recovery of Weimar democracy; on the contrary, it drove the country towards democratic breakdown and the establishment of a most cruel totalitarian dictatorship. Any effort to understand the reasons for this outcome must acknowledge the importance of actors involved in the process, as well as analyze their preferences, strategies, actions, and mistakes.

Thus, making allowance for the obvious peculiarities of different national histories and contexts, our three cases of survival and our two of breakdown present striking similarities: a polarized and fragmented party system, together with serious social tension or unrest (widespread political violence in Finland, Italy, and Germany; increased radicalization of ethnic conflict in Czechoslovakia; emerging ethnic tensions and corruption scandals in Belgium), favored the emergence of one or more sizable antisystem actors, ones that many expected would see further success. In all these countries, faced with increased difficulties in forming a coalition, some sectors of the political center started cultivating projects of reaggregating the political supply to exploit the dynamism and popularity of extremists for their own political ends. This is the point in the process at which the survival and breakdown cases begin to diverge. In the former, although faced with the defection of part of their ranks, the alliance of democratic forces for the most part held firm and, despite all differences, managed to show a united front to the extremists. In the breakdown cases, the internal divisions among the democratic forces instead became worse, making stability—and, with it, defense—impossible.

The Influence of the Head of State

As we have seen in the analysis of survival cases, the head of state can offer decisive assistance towards the achievement of a common democratic front: breakdown and survival cases show a sharp difference in the behavior and strategies pursued by the respective heads of state. The head of state can also have an important *direct* role in defending democracy: he can intervene

Table 7.2 Head-of-State interventions in Political Crises

Interventions by Head of State	Countries (years of crisis)				
	Belgium (1936–39)	Czechoslovakia (1933–38)	Finland (1929–36)	Italy (1921–26)	Weimar (1930–33)
Aggregation of political supply: Coalition-forming	Decisive interventions in 1936 and 1937	Normally active in supporting center-based coalitions	No	Appoints Mussolini as head of government in October 1922. Passive in the earlier phase of crisis.	Suspends parliamentary government in 1930. Destabilizing influence on cabinets in 1930–32.
Direct intervention: Public opinion	Some interventions against Rex	Wide and repeated interventions	Limited to Civil Guards during revolt	No	No
Dirct intervention: Policy concessions	No	Influences policies pro-Sudeten German "activists"	Supports crushing of Communism	No	No
Direct intervention: Emergency powers	Not used	Not used until 1938	Used to repress Lapua insurrection in 1932	King vetoes their use against Fascists in 1922.	Decree powers used tactically in negotiations with Nazis.

directly in the political strategies of defense by addressing appeals to the public, influencing public policy, or exercising independent powers in exceptional situations. Breakdown and survival cases differ markedly in these respects too.

Table 7.2 summarizes the interventions of the head of state in survival and breakdown cases. The cases of survival show several decisive contributions of the highest state authority in at least some of the aspects mentioned above. The head of state intervened in the competition between different reaggregation projects during the political crises in Belgium and Czechoslovakia. Given the usual difficulties of building a coalition in Belgium, the importance of the personal intervention of King Leopold III in breaking the political deadlock between the main parties after the 1936 elections can hardly be overestimated—his intervention was decisive in allowing a government to form and thus defense against Rex to be enacted. The "Castle" in Czechoslovakia consistently exerted influence against rightist political projects. Furthermore, in all three cases of democratic survival, the head of state was directly involved in defending the democratic system. The interventions of President Beneš in Czechoslovakia after 1935 had a solid precedent in those of his charismatic predecessor Thomas Masaryk in the 1920s and the first half of the 1930s. During the crisis of the 1930s, Beneš was particularly active in supporting concessions to the German activist parties as a means of winning back for them the electors who had voted for Henlein. Beneš's ad hoc appeals to public opinion were an important component of the strategy against extremists in Czechoslovakia. The Belgian king, although less directly involved in such activities, also made his voice heard against "political disorder," while Prime Minister van Zeeland fought more actively on that front. The role of President Svinhufvud was also crucial in responding to extremist threats in Finland. Svinhufvud supported the actions of the Lapua Movement in its early phase, and even while opposing some of its excesses in later phases he consistently managed to be perceived by the Movement as its main ally in the "White" establishment. His personal authority was then decisive in maintaining the loyalty of the army and the Civil Guard when Lapua, now deprived of other political perspectives, attempted an armed insurrection.

The picture that emerges from the analysis of the breakdown cases is very different. It displays a pattern of culpable inaction by the head of state in the face of antidemocratic challenges, and even, in the case of Germany, active support for the defectionist projects which made democracy such easy prey for extremists. Whether the negative role that the Italian and German highest state

authorities played in defending the democratic system was due to political inadequacy or antidemocratic inclination or both, is of relatively little importance in this context. The point is that they did *not* intervene to steer the political deadlocks arising after the elections of 1921 in Italy and 1930 in Germany towards a democratic solution. They combined inaction with outright political errors that contributed to the worsening of the political crisis.

In the increasingly difficult situation of 1922 Italy, when the parties could not find a stable agreement and the government was increasingly impotent, King Vittorio Emanuele III failed to be the "last resource" of the Italian parliamentary system, a role successfully played by the Finnish president in 1932, in circumstances that were only somewhat different. As mentioned above, Facta's attitude and strategies are important in understanding the behavior of the king during the crisis. No matter how much sympathy Fascism received in military circles, the Monarchy commanded the absolute loyalty of the army, and Mussolini would not have managed to fulfill his plans without the support of the army—something that was quite clear to the Fascist leader himself. Although it cannot be entirely excluded that a few Italian generals—but by no means all, and not in the most important places—might have cultivated some personal ambition to exploit the crisis caused by Fascism to reinforce their own power, the highest military officers were loyal to the king and they would have followed any order coming from the king and the government. But the government either could not or did not want to adopt a firm stance against Fascism; in those conditions, the military, even those generals more adverse to Fascism such as Badoglio, did not want to take on the considerable political exposure.

Thus, on the eve of the March on Rome, when the situation was becoming increasingly difficult to control, and Facta had abandoned his plans to control Mussolini, the king rejected the resignation of the government, and asked Facta to prepare any measure that was necessary to defend the capital from the Fascist march.[18] The following morning, the cabinet prepared a decree for the declaration of the state of siege, but when Facta brought the decree to the king for his signature, Vittorio Emanuele III refused to sign it.

The declared intention of the king in refusing to sign the decree was to avoid a civil conflict, but he was probably making an excessively pessimistic estimate of the extent of the clashes that would have derived from an order to defend the capital with military means. First of all, the army could have suppressed the Fascists relatively easily: the loyalty of the troops located around Rome

was beyond doubt, and even they alone outnumbered the participants in the march (28,500 compared to 26,000). More important, the army was much better armed and organized. Further, defensive structures were in place around the capital since mid-September, in consequence of an order from the minister of war (who was in close contact with the king and politically dependent on him more than on the Parliament): roadblocks and railway blocks around the capital were ready to be made operational and could have stopped the march even without a formal declaration of a state of siege.[19] It is likely that the consultation of the king during that very night with some high military authorities played an important role, but probably more important was the king's concern that the Facta government would not be able to rise to the challenge represented by that difficult moment and enact repression against the Fascists with the necessary firmness (Ferraris 1946).[20]

Thus, the king decided not to order the military defense of the capital, despite the fact that the government had formally proposed it. Although risky, several courses of action were still open to him, but he chose to give in to the Fascist march and attempt to appoint a prime minister other than Mussolini *in extremis.* At that stage, though, such a strategy was destined to fail: the king did appoint the conservative Salandra as *formateur,* counting on the fact that he was not opposed by many Fascist leaders, but Salandra's attempt met with failure after only one day, when Mussolini made clear that he would refuse to support any solution in which he was not appointed prime minister himself. Italy's parliamentary democracy would still be alive—albeit ailing—for slightly more than two years, at which point Mussolini, in reaction to the crisis following the political assassination of a Socialist politician, used his position as prime minister to suppress civil and political rights and disband all parties and political groups, with a series of laws and decrees passed between November 1925 and November 1926 (e.g., Farneti 1978).[21]

In the case of Weimar Germany, both Hindenburg's political inaction and active political interventions contributed decisively to the further destabilization of an already unstable situation. After appointing Brüning and supporting him with his decree powers, Hindenburg did not help the Chancellor politically—quite the contrary—which left Brüning's cabinet cut off from its greatest source of political strength and seriously impaired its capability to govern the country. Moreover, Hindenburg interfered several times in governmental affairs in ways that made the situation even more difficult for Brüning to manage.

This political dynamic displayed its destructive consequences in several important circumstances. For example, even before the election of 1930, the Prussian government, led by Social Democrat Otto Braun and founded on a center-left coalition, had dissolved the units of the right-wing militia *Stahlhelm* in the Rhineland and Westphalia. The reason for their dissolution was that they had held illegal military drills, which violated demilitarization clauses in the Treaty of Versailles. This was a delicate matter politically, especially as Brüning was negotiating with the Allies to obtain the early withdrawal of their troops from exactly those regions. Yet Hindenburg intervened publicly in favor of the *Stahlhelm,* calling on Braun to repeal the ban, and ignoring the opposition of both the foreign minister and the minister of the interior. Thus, rather than back the ministers of his cabinet against the polemic attacks of the *Stahlhelm* leaders, the president repeatedly went against them. Brüning, who needed the president's support for his struggle with the Reichstag, was forced to take a mediatory position.[22]

After the elections of September 1930, Brüning's negotiations to find parliamentary support for his cabinet became more difficult, but Hindenburg did not make things easier for the Chancellor. In fact, just after the elections, he encouraged Brüning to make an agreement with the small DNVP, not an easy task for the Chancellor since, given that party's extremist right-wing positions, this would have put at serious risk the support of the left-liberal *Deutsche Staatspartei* (ex-DDP) and would have ruled out the possibility of having the external support of the SDP. Moreover, the DNVP had been defeated in the elections and, in the situation of the new Reichstag, its support would not have been sufficient to transform the centrist minority supporting Brüning into a majority. These negotiations, as well as those that Brüning undertook with the NSDAP failed. (These talks were not encouraged by Hindenburg, who had a personal and political aversion to Hitler.) To Brüning's assistance came the SPD, which gave him its external support without pressing for direct participation in the cabinet. This was Brüning's favored solution—direct participation by the SDP would certainly have led to conflict with the president—and also accommodated the concerns of the SPD, which were to avoid any clash with the internal left wing of the party and at the same time maintain their support for Brüning as a "last resort" for democracy in Germany. The SPD feared that Brüning would be substituted by a Hugenberg-Hitler government (Alfred Hugenberg was the leader of the DNVP) that would inevitably suppress democracy.[23] This solution, however, was of little use in responding to the pres-

sures on Brüning coming from the League of German Industrialists and important banking circles to include Social Democratic representatives in the cabinet (Matthias 1966). One of the decisive elements that determined the failure of this project was precisely Hindenburg's opposition to it (Dorpalen 1964, 207).

The impact on the political equilibrium of Hindenburg's repeated interventions in governmental affairs during 1931–32 can be summarized as follows: Hindenburg was dragged increasingly to the right, and due to personal, psychological, and political inadequacies he gave in to these pressures more and more. This destabilized the cabinet, which after the 1930 elections was already very fragile. Brüning, who enjoyed the personal esteem of the president, normally tried to react and maintain a more independent position. However, he was only partially successful in doing this, and increasingly less so as time went on: he could not break politically with the Presidency, since he had no other basis for his cabinet. Thus, the compromises that were reached time after time weakened the position of the democratic parties, which had a diminishing number of opportunities to "reattract" the cabinet into their sphere of influence. This also weakened their prestige in the face of public opinion, which had the effect of enhancing the electoral appeal of the extremists. The pressures on Hindenburg came from different sources and assumed different forms: they ranged from street protests by Nazis and other right-wing extremists, repeatedly directed against the president in 1931, blaming him for tolerating and supporting a government that showed too much leniency towards the Socialists, to the "counseling" behind the scenes of his closest aides, primarily General Kurt von Schleicher.[24] Hindenburg was particularly sensitive to these pressures: he was, both by birth and profession, a military man, part of the world that was now turning against him. His lack of political vision and his advanced age made it impossible for him to free himself from this conditioning. These factors put the Brüning cabinet into a political deadlock that would lead to its fall in 1932.

Thus, it was not long before the Nazis' increasing aggressiveness and popular appeal after their strong electoral performance in 1930 made them important political actors in the crisis. In October 1931, the NSDAP, the *Stahlhelm,* and the DNVP organized a mass antigovernment demonstration at Bad Harzburg—and Brüning asked Hindenburg to take action. This could be done either by banning the Nazis as a challenge to the constitutional order or by including them in the government and keeping them in check, avoiding at any

cost the calling of early elections, which would have favored Hitler's party. At this stage, in fact, Brüning thought that a government including the Nazis—in which he would not agree to participate—would fail to resolve the country's most urgent problems, in particular the need to obtain something in the ongoing negotiations with the Allies about reparations and disarmament, which fact he thought would drive many voters away from them. Hindenburg did not agree with either of these solutions, and "the discussion ended inconclusively" (Dorpalen 1964).

In the fall of 1931 negotiations were opened between Schleicher and Hitler on the possibility of including the Nazis in the majority. Although these negotiations were carried out with Brüning's knowledge and possibly his approval, Schleicher's ultimate goal was to use the Nazis against Brüning. He tried to convince Hindenburg that the Chancellor was the main obstacle to Nazi cooperation in the government, which would stabilize the majority and avoid the continuous resort to presidential decrees. Hindenburg thus urged Brüning to try to expand the cabinet towards the right, primarily towards the DNVP, which would possibly have brought about a change of attitude on the part of the Nazis, a prelude to their future inclusion in the majority. Brüning responded that his own contacts had shown that there was no basis for collaboration with the right and, moreover, that this would endanger a positive outcome in the international negotiations about war reparations. If such a move had to be made, it would be better to wait for the end of the negotiations, from which the Chancellor also hoped to gain the prestige he needed to reinforce his position in domestic politics.

In these months, however, there was hardly a cabinet meeting at which Hindenburg did not put forward some special request—normally in favor of the landowners or the army—disregarding the existing policies of and the constraints on the cabinet. Brüning stuck to his strategy of seeking to compromise while trying to ward off the offensive maneuvers of the right and waiting for his diplomatic endeavors to bear fruit. With this in mind, he supported the reelection of Hindenburg to the Presidency against Hitler.[25]

As of 1931, and more so the following year, Oskar von Hindenburg, son of the president, also increasingly worked against Brüning, adding his endeavors to those of Schleicher and exercising a decisive influence on the president. After the elections in several *Länder* in April 1932, in which the NSDAP reported a large victory, Schleicher intensified his effort to reach an agreement with the NSDAP for their external support for a government in which at a later

stage some Nazi could be included.[26] In return for this, the ban recently imposed on the SA and the SS (see below) would be repealed, new parliamentary elections would be held, and the NSDAP would have full freedom in their propaganda activities during the campaign. There were meetings between Schleicher and Hitler in April and May 1932 in which the General obtained the informal agreement of Hitler to his plans. Thus, assured of the benevolent neutrality at least of the Nazis, he had to convince Hindenburg to dismiss Brüning, appoint a new Chancellor, and dissolve the Reichstag.

Brüning, returning empty-handed from the disarmament conference in Geneva, was now in a more precarious position than ever, but he managed again to ward off Schleicher's intrigues. In fact, at Schleicher's suggestion, Hindenburg announced to the Chancellor that he wanted to discuss the political situation directly with the party leaders and asked his opinion. By threatening his resignation, Brüning managed to convince the president to wait for a more opportune moment. The direct consultation of party leaders would in fact have certainly been interpreted in the public and by the political forces (correctly) as a move undermining the cabinet, exactly when it was engaged in delicate negotiations about disarmament and the payment of reparations (the conference with the Allies about the latter was scheduled for mid-June in Lausanne). Brüning agreed that some Nazis should be included in the Prussian and the national governments, but the latter move should only be made after the Lausanne conference. Wilhelm Groener, who supported the ban of the SA and the SS, had to leave his post of minister of defense.

Despite all this, Brüning did not survive for long. The issue of land reform, triggering protests against Hindenburg by the landowners whose interests would have been affected by it, and the increasing efforts of the president's counselors to include the Nazis in the government, delivered the coup de grâce to the cabinet. Schleicher's contacts with the Nazis continued, and they reached agreement on Franz von Papen as new Chancellor. This piece of information was strategically allowed to become public at the end of May in order to undermine Brüning's position even further. Schleicher reported to Hindenburg that Papen's cabinet would relieve him of the need to issue presidential decrees, since the cabinet would be acceptable to the Nazis and therefore have a majority in Parliament, and at the same time that it would end the "unholy alliance" with the Socialists. This led Hindenburg to turn definitely his back on the cabinet, and Brüning to resign.

The fall of Brüning ended any hope of restoring democratic government in

Germany (e.g., Stern 1966). There was no pressing reason to dismiss the Chancellor at that moment. Rather, the decision depended on several factors mainly having to do with the beliefs, choices, and strategies of the main political actors: Hindenburg was, partly due to personal reasons and partly due to the influence of his aides, turning increasingly to the right, while the Nazis were growing in power and becoming increasingly aggressive. The president simply convinced himself that Brüning could not cope with the Nazis, so he needed somebody able to tame them in order to avoid the risk of civil war. Brüning's dismissal, however, was due to backstage intrigues that took place only because the aging and weak Hindenburg tolerated them. Schleicher simply never understood the real nature of the Nazi movement, which he considered a "normal" political party: he contributed decisively to create an atmosphere of intrigue and backstairs maneuvering that undermined the stability of the government, none of which helped him achieve his political goals (Turner 1996; see also Bracher 1972 and Winkler 1979).[27]

Incorporating the crises of the Italian and the German democracies in the comparison highlights, by contrast, how important the actions of the incumbent elites, or at least a sufficient part of them, were in the survival cases, where they managed to counteract successfully the strong centrifugal tendencies that the successes of extremists triggered in party interplay. The majority of the incumbents did not follow the centrifugal tide and, despite the apparent successes of the extremists, still chose to bet on the existing regime, often bracketing important political and cultural differences among them. The opposite happened in breakdown cases—the political center weakened and dissolved, thus making any defense against extremism practically impossible. However difficult it was, though, the fact is that reaching a political agreement was not necessarily ruled out to incumbents in Italy and Germany in the early phases of the crisis, and possibly even later: the reason that they did not reach such agreement lies in their mistaken assessment of the political situation of the country, at least as much as in any other factor. The beliefs that Italian Fascism could be "constitutionalized" without serious consequences for the existing regime and that Hitler might offer the support of his political followers to the conservative and military elites in exchange for a back-seat political office were simply mistaken—not dissimilar from those held by some right-wing circles of the Czechoslovak establishment vis-à-vis Henlein or in Belgium vis-à-vis Degrelle, for example. Alternative routes to these were difficult but possible, and they were taken in the survival cases.

Strategies of Short-term Defense

After analyzing the political dynamics of the aggregation of the political supply during the crises in both the survivals and the breakdowns, this section focuses on defensive strategies in comparative perspective, and highlights two points. First, that in Czechoslovakia, Belgium, and Finland, incumbents resorted to *both* repressive and accommodative strategies of reaction to extremism: the mix of "militancy" and "incorporation" is a recurring characteristic of successful defense. Second, the section enlarges the view beyond the three cases of "difficult" survival to include breakdown cases. The comparison shows that although some strategies of reaction adopted in the breakdown cases were similar to those enacted in the countries where democracy survived, their political value and significance were completely different.

Militancy: The Repressive Strategies

The democratic elites in Belgium and particularly in Czechoslovakia and Finland, passed ad hoc anti-extremist legislation in several fields. They were by no means exceptions in Europe during those years: virtually all democratic regimes in the area reinforced their repressive apparatus to face extremist challenges of varying seriousness (Loewenstein 1938a and b; Association Juridique Internationale 1938). Indeed, endowing the government with stronger legal means to suppress extremism was one of the most immediate responses of many democratic states to the rise of totalitarian parties and movements. As explained in chapter 3, anti-extremist legislation involves an enlargement of the boundary of what is legally permitted to government in limiting citizens' freedoms and rights—hence the highly controversial nature of such legislation from a normative viewpoint (e.g., van den Bergh 1936; Friedrich 1940, 1957; Kirchheimer 1961)—thereby rendering possible the enactment of measures intended to restrict the scope of action for extremists, and to make it more difficult for them to play the democratic game in order to bring democracy itself to collapse.[28]

Table 7.3 offers an overview of the special anti-extremist legislation in force in the European democracies during the interwar years, following the categories identified in chapter 3.[29] Czechoslovakia and Finland, which suffered the strongest extremist challenges among the survival cases, present the most extensive apparatuses of anti-extremist legislation. In those countries, as explained in the country chapters, such legislation was reinforced in virtually all

Table 7.3 Forms of Special Anti-extremist Legislation in Twelve European Democracies, 1919–1939

Legislation on:	Germany	Italy	Czecho-slovakia	Finland	Belgium	France	The Netherlands	Norway	Sweden	Denmark	Switzer-land	United Kingdom
Internal rebellion, sedition, coup (emergency powers)	1919C	(1889)	1920 1936	1930		(1849) (1878)	(1917C)	(1814C)		(1915C)	(1874C)	1920
Treason and treasonable acts	1931		1923 1936	1931	(1831) (1891) 1934	(1881) (1894) 1936	1920 1934	(1814C)		(1866)	(1853)	(1848)
Disaffection in armed forces	1919C 1922		1923		1934	(1881)	1934					1937
Disloyalty of public officials	1922		1923 1933	1931 1934			1933 1934	(1814C)		1931	1932 1937	
Existence of subversive parties/ associations			(1867) 1933 1936	1919 1930 1931		1935 1936	(1896)		1934			
Participation in subversive parties/ associations	(1878) 1922	(1889)	(1867) 1923 1933	1919 1930 1931								
Protection of democratic institutions and symbols	1922 1930		1920 1923 1933 1936	1931 1934	1934	(1881)	1934		1922 1937		(1853)	(1884)

Protection of personal honor		(1889)	1923 1933	1934		1937			(1812) 1922	1934		
Glorification of political crime			1923	1931								
False news	(1874) 1931		1923 1933	1934		(1881) 1935			(1812) 1937		1936	
Other excesses of propaganda	1931 1932		1923 1934	1934	1937		1934					1936
Freedom of the press	1931 1932	(1889)	1933 1934	1919 1930					(1812) 1922	(1915C)	1934	
Foreign propaganda			1932			1934					1936	
Party uniforms	1931		1936	1934			1933	1933 1934	1933	1933	1933	1936
Party militias	1932			1931	1934 1936	1936	1936		1934	1934		
Military training	1931		1923									(1819)
Wearing of arms	1928 1931	1921	1923		1933 1936	1935 1936			1934			1936 1937
Freedom of assembly	1923 1931	(1865) (1889)	1921			1935				(1915C)		(1908) 1936

Sources: Official collections of legislation for Germany, Italy, Czechoslovakia, Belgium, and Finland; Annuaire de l'Institut International de Droit Public; Swedish Department of Justice (1935); and Loewenstein (1938a and 1938b).

areas that were significant at the time. In Belgium too, special legislation was passed in some areas.[30] Three points deserve attention here: first, in almost all cases, *new* pieces of legislation were passed whenever a new challenge emerged or an existing one seemed to have become more dangerous: most anti-extremist legislation in this period is therefore to be seen as a conscious *reaction* of the democratic forces to extremist challenges, more than a form of prevention. Democratic incumbents found themselves confronted with the new problem of an emerging mass antisystem challenge and devised new tools to tackle it, including legislation. Second, although the table 7.3 does not necessarily include separate pieces of legislation in each cell—the same law could involve protection of democracy in different areas—it is apparent that most countries passed anti-extremist norms after Hitler came to power in January 1933. This circumstance offers general evidence of how traumatic that event was for the remaining European democracies at that time, and how much the rise to power of Nazism influenced extreme right-wing movements in other countries, making them more dangerous for the existence of democracy in those countries. A third and final point that table 7.3 makes clear is that in Weimar Germany several pieces of anti-extremist legislation were indeed passed, but they did not save democracy from collapse, an aspect that deserves further analysis.[31]

The most important piece of anti-extremist legislation in the Weimar Republic was the "Law for the Protection of the Republic" of July 1922. The law, and the emergency decree powers constitutionally granted to the president, were used effectively by President Ebert, who was in office between 1919 and 1925 (see Jasper 1963; Gusy 1991). The 1922 law was then reapproved, in a partially weakened form, in 1930. In the following years, other defensive measures were adopted by presidential decree. In March 1931 Hindenburg, in the face of public disorder, issued a decree—for such measures there was no majority in Parliament—"*gegen politische Ausschreitungen*" ("against political excesses"), which included provisions limiting political propaganda and protecting public order by limiting freedom of assembly (Huber 1981, 809). The escalation of political violence in the summer and fall of 1931 led to the introduction of reinforced measures with new presidential decrees in July, August, October, and December of that year, and several new interventions of the same tenor during 1932.[32] In April 1932, the Brüning government dissolved the Nazi militia, the *Sturm Abteilung* (SA); the ban was then repealed by the Papen cabinet.

Why did none of these measures really work, in particular against the Nazis? To be sure, the gravity of the public disorder should not be underestimated, but it probably only partially accounts for this phenomenon. The main reason why the anti-extremist norms were not effective against extremists should be sought in the coalition strategies that the most influential actors in the political establishment pursued at that stage: the forces around Hindenburg and to a lesser extent the moderate right-wing parties always kept open the possibility of an alliance with the NSDAP and never tried to constitute a common democratic front against the right-wing extremists. This shows how defending democracy becomes impossible if the actual strategies of defense—repression and accommodation both—are not backed by a stable political coalition. This was the case in Weimar, in which the decrees of 1931–32 responded to the intention of antidemocratic cliques within the establishment to win the support of the Nazis by negotiating from positions of strength rather than to preserve (or help restore) the stability of the democratic system of rule.

A few examples illustrate the point. In October 1931, the Social Democratic prime minister of Prussia reported to the Regional Parliament about the increasingly grave situation of the *Land* and of the country in general as far as the spread of political violence was concerned. He pleaded for the national government to dissolve all political militias (technically, for the coordination of the regional police corps in pursuit of this goal) on the basis of the Law for the Protection of the Republic, which allowed the dissolution of all organization having anticonstitutional goals.[33] However, the government had no intention of heeding this plea (Huber 1981, 895). A similar situation occurred again in March 1932, when the minister of the defense and interior, Groener, proposed to dissolve the Nazi SA and SS with an ad hoc presidential decree that would have excluded judicial review, which would have been necessary if the ban had occurred on the basis of the existing anti-extremist legislation. His strategy was to exploit a propitious moment: the elections in Prussia and other *Länder* were coming up, and active resistance to the ban by the NSDAP was unlikely, as it would have destroyed their hopes of an otherwise likely electoral victory. But the goal of the proposed measures was not to defend the republic: Groener's real aim was to succeed Brüning at the Chancellery. The prospect of replacing Brüning, in fact, was in the air, and since Groener wanted to have the support of the NSDAP for his project, he wanted to negotiate from positions of strength vis-à-vis Hitler—"freeing" him at the same time from his internal rivals in the SA and their violent public image. In Groener's plan, the youth

constituting the bulk of the SA would, after its ban, be included in a state-controlled "*Wehrsportverband*" (Huber 1981). Brüning, who credited Hitler's commitment to legality much less than Groener did, still did not want to close the door to the NSDAP, so he supported Groener's proposal and convinced Hindenburg to issue a presidential decree ordering the immediate dissolution of both the SA and the SS. The measure was half-hearted, however, and did not inaugurate a fight against the NSDAP: in fact, it did not declare the anti-constitutionality of the SA as a whole, both for its means and its political goals.[34] This would have led to the question of the anticonstitutionality of the NSDAP, one the government wanted to avoid. In fact, Brüning's strategy was still to make the NSDAP *regierungsfähig* ("fit for governance")—that is, to "tame" it and include it in a new majority supporting the government (Huber 1981, 944). As a tactical move, Hitler ordered the SA and the SS to submit to the ban without resistance. The organizations (counting about 400,000 members at the time) were formally outlawed but not disbanded in practice, and they continued their existence underground so that they were ready to reemerge some time later, when the Papen cabinet lifted the ban. Interestingly, a few days after the ban, Hindenburg wrote to the minister of the interior requesting the same treatment for similar organizations associated with other parties, where he had information that they were guilty of the same deeds as the SA. Hindenburg referred in the first place to the *Reichsbanner* (a center-left militia that proclaimed itself as the "defender of the Republic"), and this put the cabinet again in serious political difficulties, since a ban against that organization would have meant an open fight with the SPD and the sectors of the *Zentrum* and the *Staatspartei* supporting it. On the other hand, an open conflict between the president and the cabinet would have meant a cabinet crisis, to be avoided at any cost before the impending elections in Prussia. Brüning managed to find a compromise: dissolution of the Communist militias and placement of all other organizations under state control. This amounted to checks on their by-laws, but at the same time it showed the great political weakness of the forces supporting the government, which, in May, would lead to the substitution of Brüning with Papen, and to the final phase of the republic.

Returning to the comparative analysis of defensive strategies, repression is not necessarily limited to the enactment of special legislation. A less visible, yet also important, set of repressive strategies involves all administrative or informal interventions by the executive in their discretionary spheres, sometimes on the basis of existing legislation not expressly conceived as a reaction to

extremist forces, even to the point of stretching its boundaries. This does not require overt coordination between the parties forming the majority, as in the case of the passing of special legislation, so it is a more immediate—although more limited—option of making extremists' lives difficult. In principle, the executive can intervene within their realm of competence, or even beyond it, in the field of "invisible politics" (Bobbio 1978). Systematic data for such situations can be elusive, but our cases do offer some evidence. The Belgian executive, for example, used its discretionary powers to harass Rex with administrative provisions in several ways during the period in which Degrelle's followers seemed to be on an unstoppable rise. The prohibition of the "March on Brussels" in October 1936, the refusal to allow Degrelle to use the broadcast time on national radio allotted to his party, the pressure put on the general prosecutor by the minister of justice to speed up the pending trials against Rexists, the wave of arrests of Rexist journalists and commentators (who, as no sound legal basis existed for their arrest, were soon released), the house searches of Rexist leaders and sympathizers, and so on—all of this points to the Belgian government's willingness to take direct action in this sphere. In Czechoslovakia, several administrative provisions against extremists were taken even before the passing of the most important anti-extremist laws in 1933–36, and the government of course increased this pressure after these laws were passed. For example, the replacement of ethnically German police officers with Czech ones in "hot" areas of the Sudeten regions had already started in 1928, and after 1933 was simply intensified. Thus, Czech police officers were appointed in several Sudeten towns and also in bigger cities such as Reichenberg (Liberec) and Karlsbad (Karlovy Vary). The "invisible" influence of the Czechoslovak political establishment on the judiciary should also be mentioned. It was possible for governments and the head of state to use the courts to prosecute their political adversaries well before the passing of the bulk of the anti-extremist legislation in the 1930s, a tactic actually made easier with the passing of this legislation, which substantially reduced the legal protections for defendants.[35] In Finland, many episodes of police repression against the Communists in the 1920s did not have fully legal backing, as explained in chapter 6. Police and judicial repression was instead rather mild against the extreme right after the disbanding of the Lapua Movement in early 1932: the sympathies and protection that the Lapua Movement still enjoyed in Finnish political institutions and society reduced the use and severity of repressive measures (judicial sentences were mild, for example) and suggested caution to Svinhufvud

and the other supporters of the repression of February 1932 (e.g., Micheles Dean et al. 1934, 277).

Incorporation: Enlarging the Consensus

"Militancy" is normally accompanied by "incorporation" strategies of defense—that is, by explicit attempts to regain in the short term the support for the existing system from sectors of the extremist bloc, be they sectors of the voters, the rank and file, or the elite. The general goal of incorporation strategies is to weaken the antisystem challenge by incorporating some parts of it, making sure that they no longer constitute a danger for the regime. As explained in chapter 3, various actions can be undertaken in pursuit of this general purpose: the executive can agree on policy concessions, embark on an intensive program of ad hoc appeals to public opinion, negotiate with the extremists, or create an alternative organization in competition with an extremist counterpart. Table 7.4 summarizes the strategies of defense (both repressive and accommodative) adopted in Czechoslovakia, Finland, and Belgium in the interwar years.

The purpose of both policy concessions and appeals to the public is to persuade the actual or potential electorate, or more generally the supporters, of the antisystem challenge to give their support to prosystem actors—in particular to the border parties, from which the extremists are mainly siphoning their support. Both strategies were pursued with lucidity and determination in Czechoslovakia, where after 1935 the head of state and the national government endeavored to support the Sudeten German "activist" parties from which the SdP was drawing votes. The Czechoslovak democratic elites consciously used both public appeals and policy concessions to try to convince the Sudeten German electors to switch their votes back to the moderate German parties, supporting the view that a democratic and multi-ethnic Czechoslovakia could solve their problems better than whatever adventurous perspective the SdP was offering. The cabinet, also thanks to the influence of Beneš, allocated budget funds to German-inhabited areas in proportion to their population, and in some fields and years even overproportionally. Specific concessions to the German minority were formalized in an official agreement between the national government and the German activist parties, to help the government restore its credibility vis-à-vis the Sudeten community after the electoral landslide victory of the SdP.

In Finland, the main "policy concession" to the extreme right—made neces-

Table 7.4 Strategies of Defense of Democracy

Country (Extremist Actor)	Militancy (Anti-extremist Legislation)	Incorporation	
		Rank and File	Sectors of the Elite
Belgium (Rexists, 1936–39)	Medium	Appeals to the public Sector organizations of Catholic Party created for electoral appeal	No
Finland (Lapua Movement/NC, 1929–32)	Strong	Ban of Communist organizations Attempt to create a new organization	Attempt to create a new organization
Czechoslovakia (SdP, 1933–38)	Strong	Appeals to the public Strategic policy concessions to German moderate parties	(Inconclusive) contacts with SdP

sary by the critical situation in the country—was the eradication of all Communist activities in 1930: had the government not taken this course of action, it is highly probable that the Lapuans would have taken over the system and undone Finnish democracy. In the difficult situation of the time, no appeals to the public were used to reduce the potential threat to democracy, nor were they likely to have much effect. For a long time, the actions of the Lapuans were popular among a large part of the "bourgeois" public, probably more so than among leaders of the "White" parties, some of whom were dragged towards more extremist positions by pressure from their constituencies. The evolution of the situation in the subsequent months led to a military-style clash, in which public appeals would be of no consequence.

In Belgium, the van Zeeland government, after the 1936 elections, decided to react to the increasingly aggressive propaganda of Rex with its own propaganda. To this end, a program of public meetings and speeches by the prime minister and several other ministers and democratic leaders was planned, in which they warned the population and in particular the Catholic electorate about the danger represented by Rex. The active involvement of the prime minister in these activities deserves special mention: one of the primary elements of Rexist propaganda was a sustained attack against the traditional

Belgian politicians, branded by Degrelle and the Rexists as irredeemably corrupt—an accusation that inevitably found some audience in the broader public, given the recent politico-financial scandals that had shattered the Belgian establishment. Van Zeeland, however, was not a traditional politician, being rather a technocrat—before becoming prime minister in 1935 he was vice president of the Central Bank—with a spotless reputation. In this respect, he represented an important political resource for the traditional parties against Rex.

In principle, negotiations with the extremists can serve the purpose of attracting the moderate sectors of the latter back into support for the system, thereby splitting the extremist forces and weakening the systemic challenge. As emerges from the experiences of Italy and Germany, this can be a very dangerous strategy, but the risk obviously depends on the political cohesiveness of the majority. Negotiations were not prominent in the strategies of defense that the democratic elites of Belgium, Czechoslovakia, and Finland adopted: they mainly relied on other tactics to split the extremist groups in order to bring parts of them back into the democratic fold. In Czechoslovakia there were only "informational contacts" between Hodža and Henlein before the government was forced into frantic negotiations—which had no chance of having any effect on democratic stability—by the worsening of the international situation in 1937–38. The Belgian public authorities never undertook negotiations with the Rexists. With the exclusion of contacts on the local level to bargain over the formation of electoral lists in some districts in 1936—which were soon abandoned in any case—the same attitude was typical of the internal majority of the Catholic Party.[36]

Finally, a further incorporation strategy that the incumbent elites can pursue is to create a "competitor" organization that adopts some of the slogans of the extremists but remains firmly under the control of the establishment—the purpose being to dry up some of the sources of support of an existing anti-system organization by attracting part of its rank and file. The same strategy can be adopted after the disbandment of an extremist group; it could also be addressed to some elite members lacking a political home after the disbandment as well as to the extremist rank and file, and would have the goal of preempting the formation of a new organization of the same kind that "picks up the pieces" of the old one, hence perpetuating the danger to the system. After outlawing the Lapua Movement, Svinhufvud attempted to integrate both the rank and file and parts of the extremist elite by creating an alternative organization. His goal was to create an all-inclusive new right-wing movement under

his control, one that would continue the Lapua Movement's fight against Marxism mainly by educational means and without endangering public order. However, this attempt failed: less than a month after the founding convention of the Patriotic People's Movement, Svinhufvud's collaborators found themselves sidetracked and outnumbered, with the result that they completely lost control of their "creature." Interestingly, this strategy is in broad outlines similar to the one adopted by Groener in March 1932 vis-à-vis the SA, described earlier in this chapter. This course of action was in the end not pursued, but in any case the political prerequisites for it to have any positive role in improving the chance of German democracy were lacking. No alternative organization was created by the Czechoslovak government after the ban, in October 1933, of the Sudeten German Nationalist and Nazi Parties (and the "post-prohibition" elements of the new party ban law remained paper measures): Henlein's *Sudetendeutscher Heimatsfront* was therefore able to emerge and gather the old members and supporters of Sudeten German "negativism" while concealing its real nature as a successor organization (Smelser 1979). At the last moment, the ban on the *Deutsche Nationalpartei* was lifted in order to allow a competitor organization for Henlein to exist, but this move failed, since the relegalized DNP never constituted a serious rival for the SdP. In Belgium, a somewhat similar strategy was enacted against Rex at the party level by the Catholic leader Hubert Pierlot in the difficult electoral campaign of 1936, when he set up ad hoc organizations that could attract potential Rexist electors.

Defending democracy is a political process, and successful defense consists of a democratic majority winning a political battle against an extremist minority. If the democratic majority is cohesive and eventual defectionist tendencies are kept at bay, then even strong challenges can be confronted successfully. Once the democratic front is kept together and the extremists become politically isolated, democratic elites can use the institutions of the state (the government's competences, the legal system, the state budget, emergency powers, and so on) as well as their political influence (negotiations, appeals to the public, and so on) to react to the extremist challenge. The different reactions can be placed into two main categories: "militancy" (repressive) and "incorporation" (accommodative) strategies. If the goal of militancy is to make the existence and political action of extremist groups more difficult, and even, in some respects, impossible, this is often politically very costly, so it is generally ac-

companied by parallel strategies (incorporation) intended to reduce the political costs by weakening the extremist camp. This objective is pursued by targeted accommodative strategies to include sectors of the extremist organization or followers in the area of systemic consensus. In defending democracy, anti-extremist legislation can be a powerful weapon in the hands of a democratic majority, and not only when it is actually enacted: even the possibility of its enactment can constitute a credible threat and have a concrete influence on the strategies and behavior of the extremist actor(s) who adapt to it, as they try to anticipate its harmful effects. A democratic majority would support "covert" influences of the executive on the bureaucracy or the courts to hinder extremists using those means, in some cases breaching the rule of law but quite far from abandoning it altogether. And representatives of the same majority can engage in active policies and political actions to gain back to systemic support as many actual and potential extremist supporters as possible.

We have long known of what democratic leadership failure consisted; at the end of this analysis, we are much better placed to say something about *successful* democratic leadership. The analysis has shown that successful defense is possible even in cases where the extremist challengers are politically strong enough to be able both to attack the system and to complicate cooperation among the democratic forces. Defense depends on whether democratic forces manage to put aside their political divergences in the face of the crisis and cooperate on the common objective of keeping democracy alive above all else, and so avoid political adventures that can endanger the survival of the regime; this is probably the main component of democratic leadership success in reaction to crises caused by the rise of one or more strong antisystem parties which threaten to take over the regime. Moreover, what our cases of difficult survival show is that, as a rule, in order to defend democracy from serious extremist threats, democratic elites must walk the fine line between suspension of democracy "from above" and takeover of democracy "from below." It is mainly for this reason that "statesmanship, flexibility and timing" are all the more "badly needed," as Linz put it in the epigraph that opens this chapter. But what does this involve, more specifically? The experience of the countries analyzed here shows that democratic leaders have done good service to the persistence of the democratic regime, first of all by *correctly recognizing and assessing the challenge,* that is to say its ideological anti-systemness and its dangerous potential; second, by endeavoring to *keep democratic forces together* in face of a challenge from one or more successful extremist parties and to

isolate the extremists. Once these two events have taken place, they can then *take defensive action* against the challenges.

Recognizing the disruptive nature of an emerging antisystem challenge in interwar Europe was not always easy. The wave of antidemocratic movements was relatively new at the time (especially in Italy, where the crisis happened much earlier), and the phenomenon was much more ambiguous than similar events in later decades, when the unforgettable experience of past autocratic regimes made everybody aware of the danger represented by such ideologies. Moreover, at that time, such movements resorted to different slogans and catchwords, some of which appealed to important parts of the establishment. The Lapua Movement, for example, purported to be the purest herald of the values of "White" Finland, which were those of the governing forces too. Henlein concealed his real aims behind a smoke curtain of democratic rhetoric, skillfully presenting himself both inside and outside Czechoslovakia as a moderate politician whose only goal was to fight for the freedom and self-determination of his people. And Degrelle's appeals against corruption and inefficiency found a receptive audience not only in the Belgian electorate and civil society, but also in sectors of the political establishment of the country. Yet, despite all this, the Finnish, Czechoslovak, and Belgian democratic elites managed to recognize the true nature of these challenges; to assess correctly their destructive potential for the democratic, pluralist system; and to take the right attitude of confrontation towards them.

Keeping the democratic forces together during a crisis of this kind is to solve a very difficult political equation. The main problem is that the logic of electoral competition in the presence of strong extremists is likely to encourage defections from the political center exactly when cooperation is most important. The differences between the parties and the interests composing the democratic front make the incumbents even more vulnerable to antisystem propaganda. The defensive strategies enacted against the extremists, therefore, have not only the purpose to defend the system, but also that of compensating as much as possible for such political vulnerability. In fact, the democratic parties cannot follow the extremists in their outbidding strategies, since this would lead to the breakup of the democratic front and endanger the system, so they rely on different strategies—making it difficult for threatening parties to use all their propaganda weapons or to disrupt public order, and also trying to attract parts of them by granting partial concessions that do not, however, put in doubt the ideological choice in favor of democracy. Using legislation, the

budget, and other tools to counteract electoral threats is a risky business, though. In fact, the incumbents have to do this together, each helping each other's electoral cause, rather than competing independently. In particular, if the whole democratic front supports strategies to weaken the extremists, it is likely that not all the parties composing the front will benefit in the same measure, but rather the border party or parties that had been losing consensus to the extremists are most likely to attract votes back from them. Thus, for the sake of the survival of the system, the whole front will have to support strategies that will, in the end, favor one constituent party more than the others—which, again, goes against a purely partisan logic.[37]

The common action of the democratic front in favor of border parties was not always sufficient to compensate their losses in the short run. Renouncing their immediate electoral interests, however, did not deter the leaders of the border parties from cooperating with the rest of the front, even though this meant bearing substantial political costs, particularly in electoral terms. The rise of Rex in 1935–36, for example, cost the Belgian Catholic party about a quarter of its votes, while the Sudeten German Agrarian Party lost more than half of its electoral support in 1935 to Henlein's SdP.[38] Yet these parties remained in the democratic front both before the "critical" elections, when it was clear that they would have lost consensus—although none of them could foresee the actual extent of their electoral setback—and after them, despite the fact that they had to try to win back the votes lost to the extremists while at the same time maintaining a difficult compromise with heterogeneous forces, which brought the palpable risk of watering down their policy objectives and reducing their office spoils. The complementary strategy of the other participants in the "democratic collusion" necessary to keep the democratic front together must be to avoid outright competition with each other, trying to help electorally the most threatened border parties wherever possible. The tasks of the components of the democratic front can be made even more difficult, especially if they are internally divided or, even more, if they are threatened by additional extremist parties that might attract part of their electorate—the usual example being the distraction of the Communists on the left while a more threatening antidemocratic movement agitates from the right. This difficulty does not change the fact that a key characteristic of successful democratic leadership is the clear distancing from all antisystem parties during the crisis: flirting with them is dangerous no matter how difficult alternative paths are.

If a democratic front needs to support the government during a crisis, it will find that it is in a much better position if it has included in the democratic political "game"—*very* early, that is, even years before the crisis—political forces that are ideologically prosystem but not directly involved in the regime-founding coalition. The inclusion of these forces in parliamentary bargaining, or even in the government majority in noncrisis times, will enlarge the regime's basis of legitimacy before the crisis sets in. In the political crises analyzed here, the support of some forces left out the regime-founding coalition at the start of the new regime but included later—such support constituted an important resource for the government in those difficult moments. In principle, if ideologically prosystem parties existing outside the regime-founding coalition are integrated at some institutional level beforehand, then it is likely that the government will be able to count on a larger set of allies to back their strategies of defense. This increases the chances of a successful defense since it also reduces the "blackmail power" of any one member of the government coalition. Two examples will suffice to establish the point. In Czechoslovakia, the activist Sudeten German parties had fully participated in the parliamentary negotiation of legislation with the Petka (the five parties that founded the republic) since 1922–23 and were included in the national government after 1925 (see table B.1 in appendix B).[39] In Finland, some "White" parties had included Tanner's Social Democrats in the bargaining for the election of the Finnish president since the inception of the independent republic (see table B.5 in appendix B). In both cases, such inclusion made those regimes unusually stable when the deepest moments of the political crisis hit. The same can be said of the inclusion of the Belgian Socialist Party in the 1919 "Accord de Lophem," which provided a broad base to Belgian democracy after World War I.[40] The importance of including these forces *after* they moderate their ideological goals and render them compatible with the persistence of the democratic regime cannot be emphasized enough. The opposite strategy—that is, hoping that institutional inclusion will lead to ideological moderation—does not work, at least in the cases under discussion here.[41] The Sudeten activist parties, the Finnish Social Democrats, and the Belgian Socialists had all given evidence of ideological moderation well before their inclusion took place. Vision and political skill are required for these kinds of choices, since integrating outsiders is generally costly in terms of short-term policy goals and possibly governmental effectiveness. Contrast the consistent and firm isola-

tion of ideologically antisystem parties during the crises: the Rexists, the Sudeten German Nationalists, the Finnish Communists and, after 1932, the Lapua Movement and NC: the democratic elites marked clearly their distance from them.[42]

Once the democratic front is reasonably stable, and the firewall between it and the antisystem actors is sufficiently thick, *defensive action can be taken* to confront the extremists. Different strategies of reaction in the short term, although from a relatively limited catalogue, were enacted in different countries, but one element is constant, as mentioned above: the mix of militancy and incorporation. In different ways, democratic elites in Czechoslovakia, Finland, and Belgium met the most serious challenges with the dual strategy of keeping extremists out of the political game by means of repressive actions while at the same time emptying their "political reserve" by adopting strategies of political accommodation. Defensive reactions were most balanced in Czechoslovakia, where both repressive and inclusive strategies were enacted at the same time. In Finland repression ultimately gained the upper hand over accommodation, but the latter was present in the outlawing of the Communists in 1930–31, which can be considered a desperate (and forced) attempt to accommodate the Lapuans, although it proved insufficient to stabilize the situation, making repression at a later stage necessary. The problem of incorporating in the system the masses that had supported the disbanded Lapua Movement was explicitly addressed by Svinhufvud with the creation of the IKL, but his project failed, which was certainly one of the major causes of the continuing destabilization of the Finnish system in 1932–36. In Belgium, resort to some anti-extremist legislation as well as to some incorporation strategies was also necessary to counteract Rex, with the help of some administrative and judicial repression.

The recurrence of this mix does not seem to be casual: this two-track approach is probably the peculiar way that democracies react effectively to dangerous antisystem challenges. Repression, both legislative and administrative, seeks to make it impossible, or at least difficult, for the extremists to play a game governed by democratic rules. Based on the guarantee of the right to political dissent, democracy is in principle always vulnerable to the possibility that a political actor will use its right to political participation and dissent to achieve power democratically but to eliminate the very possibility of dissent once in power. "Militant" legislation is a way of partially solving this dilemma in the practice of politics by denying legitimacy to some forms of political

dissent and making the democratic game more arduous for those who aim to undo its rules. The very nature of democracy, however, renders a strategy of defense based exclusively on repression comparatively less effective. In general, repressive measures would probably be enough to neutralize, in the short run, the threat posed, for example, by a terrorist group. (In the medium to long term, though, the government would have to address and solve the problems that lie at the root of the terrorist actions.) When confronted with antisystem parties or groups of significant size playing the democratic game of dissent and participation rather than that of secrecy and violence, however, repression can at best solve only part of the problem, even if one considers the short term only. Simply denying legitimacy to certain forms of dissent and arresting those most active in propagating them, in fact, leaves unresolved the problem of what to do with the large number of extremist *followers.* Repression is often directed mainly against the extremist elites and must therefore be complemented by parallel short-term strategies designed to win back to democracy the popular support that has gathered under antidemocratic banners.[43] This obviously leaves open the problem of "draining the swamp" of the social sources of extremism—that is, addressing the social grievances that are likely to fuel extremist protest. This generally involves policies that bear fruit in the longer run, an important but different question.

The fact that the Belgian, Czechoslovak, and Finnish elites successfully reacted to extremists in the short term by adopting a mix of repression and accommodation does not mean that every single component of the mix was successful in the same degree. In Czechoslovakia both militant and accommodative strategies largely worked, and would probably have kept the situation under control if it had not been for the change in the international politics, which allowed Hitler's conquest of the Sudetenland in September 1938.[44] In Belgium, militancy was relatively less important but was also crucial in key moments, and the appeals to the public also appear to have had some effect on counteracting Rex's aggressive propaganda. Finland is a clear case of successful repression (both against the Communists and the extreme right) and failed accommodation. The Lapua Movement, in fact, could not be appeased by the final crushing of Communism, nor could the extreme right, after the disbandment of Lapua, be channeled into Svinhufvud's brainchild, the (early) Patriotic People's Movement.

So in Czechoslovakia, Belgium, and Finland, the countries in which democracy came closest to collapse among all cases of survival in interwar Europe,

each situation required a different blend of strategies, which were not individually effective in the same measure. This means that, if some basic elements of successful democratic leadership are common to all experiences—the farsighted inclusion of moderate oppositions in the political game, the correct assessment of the challenge, the endeavor of achieving cohesion among democratic forces, the distancing from antisystem parties, the enactment of defensive strategies—others, in particular certain specific strategies of defense, are sensitive to the specific context. In other words, there is no standard "recipe" beyond a very broad mix of repression and accommodation, of what strategies to adopt and when, since different strategies can be adopted to address similar problems and prove successful in solving them, while quite similar strategies can fail in seemingly similar contexts. Again, the choice of the "right" strategies depends on the leaders: they are the ones who are best placed to know what can work in their own countries as circumstances arise. Needless to say, they don't act in a vacuum: they are subject to constraints, and not all political problems can be solved through their determination and knowledge alone. Sometimes factors beyond their control, be they international, social, or cultural, steer the development of a political crisis towards "impossible games." Moreover, although leaders learn from other experiences—examples from the past and present—in making their choices to save democracy from its enemies, the same choices might not apply in all contexts. The importance of external constraints and influences on leaders and the implications of these findings for the study of the interaction between democracy and extremism in historical and cultural contexts outside of interwar Europe are the subject of the next and final chapter.

Conclusion

> The sensitivity of historical sequences to leaders and exceptional people is dependent on the stability of the social circumstances.
>
> —AVIEZER TUCKER, "HISTORIOGRAPHICAL COUNTERFACTUALS AND HISTORICAL CONTINGENCY"

What are the implications of this study for our conception of regime change and persistence on the one hand and of the interaction between democracy and extremism on the other in interwar Europe as well as in other contexts? This chapter addresses these questions. In the first part, I discuss the empirical and theoretical contribution of the findings of this study to the existing theories on regime change and persistence in interwar Europe and beyond; in the second part, I focus on its relevance for the study of reactions to extremism in other contexts than interwar Europe, suggesting some priorities for future research in the field.

Reactions to Extremism, Defense of Democracy, and the Debate on Interwar Europe

As mentioned in chapter 1, the longstanding prevalence of "structuralist" explanations of democratic survival and breakdown in interwar Europe was challenged, about a quarter century ago, by Linz and Stepan's groundbreaking analysis of democratic breakdowns, in which the focus was shifted from

Table 8.1 Approaches to Regime Persistence and Change in Interwar Europe

		Approach	
		Actor-based	Structure-based
Main focus on	Breakdown	e.g., Linz and Stepan 1978	e.g., Lipset 1960; Moore 1966; Luebbert 1991; Rueschemeyer et al. 1992
	Survival	This study	

"macro-structural" factors to the impact of the ideas, actions, strategies, and mistakes of the incumbent elites (Linz and Stepan 1978). This book uses a similar approach to explain not democratic breakdown, which was the focus of Linz and Stepan's analysis, but democratic survival, thus helping fill a gap in the literature (table 8.1; see Capoccia 2001).

In the eyes of a social science that looks, on the one hand, at impersonal and structural explanations of political events and, on the other, at social and political change, a study that adopts an actor-based approach to explain stability raises a few questions of theory and method whose implications need to be addressed. First of all, focus on change is normally justified by the fact that phenomena such as regime transformation, revolution, and the like, make a difference for the life of large numbers of people: the same, however, applies to the *persistence* of a democratic regime in the face of a real possibility of breakdown. Analyzing what remains the same (democratic survival) helps understand better why change (democratic breakdown) occurs in similar circumstances. A second observation is that the analysis in this book is meant as a complement, not an alternative, to the existing ones. In other words, the objective here is not to *falsify* structural approaches—not only because "approaches, like paradigms, cannot be falsified" (Lebow 2000a, 594), but mainly because such approaches remain essential to the understanding of European political development and of the past in general, since they help us to comprehend the limitations imposed on human agency by social patterns, economic conditions, climates of opinion, and the like. In general, though, structural analyses are not as helpful in explaining how actors respond to crises, which is precisely when the structural limitations mentioned above lose much of their constraining force and contingent events such as the decisions of individual leaders increase in importance.

The choice of focusing on a small number of cases, as in this study, also merits some discussion. In what ways can the analysis of three small European democracies usefully complement the much larger studies in terms of geographical breadth and historical depth included in the right-hand column of table 8.1? I discuss these issues in the next sections, highlighting first the contribution that the analysis of a small number of particularly interesting cases can give to the existing literature, moving afterwards to discuss some of the theoretical and methodological problems related to the incorporation of contingency in the analysis of political development.

Many Countries or Few? Research Design and Empirical Findings

From the early, groundbreaking study by Lipset (1959) to the more recent contributions by Berg-Schlosser and Mitchell (1999, 2002), several comparative studies on interwar Europe have often incorporated many cases, possibly all or nearly all European countries. In addition to this, some of the most influential studies in the field, such as Luebbert (1991) or Rueschemeyer, Huber Stephens, and Stephens (1992) have also achieved significant historical depth, going back several decades in order to explain regime change and persistence in the interwar years (see also Ertman 1998, 483). Whether implicit or explicit, the contention underlying this kind of research design is that the investigator can avoid sampling biases that might lend undue weight to certain variables, thus allowing him or her to arrive at superior results than those based on the analysis of a smaller number of units.[1] While it is certainly not my intention here to deny the importance and desirability of more expansive comparisons, analyzing all the cases in a population, however defined, is not the only strategy of case selection in comparative politics that can lead to worthy results. In fact, general explanations allow a higher degree of generalization at the cost of leaving out some degree of unexplained variance, "outliers" that are either misclassified or never adequately explained. But it is the analysis of outliers that allows exactly the deepening of the sources of such unexplained variance (including both omitted variables and measurement error), thus leading to new hypotheses and theory development (e.g., Eckstein 1975; Van Evera 1997; George and Bennett 2004; Brady, Collier, and Seawright 2004). Czechoslovakia, Finland, and Belgium not only constitute interesting cases of "polarization reversal," they are also "outliers" for virtually all structuralist theories in the field.[2]

To begin with, given the structural conditions of interwar Europe, the real

puzzle seems to be not democratic breakdown but rather democratic survival: applying some of the "minimal conditions" for democracy elaborated by the recent scholarship on democratization to interwar Europe permits the conclusion that possibly no democracy should have survived. Considering, for example, the importance of economic development for democratic stability, famously emphasized by Lipset (Lipset 1959, 1960), it should be remarked that no European democracy between the wars had reached the level of $4,000 per capita income that Przeworski and his collaborators identified in their recent study as the level under which no nonpresidential democracy collapsed between 1950 and 1990 (Przeworski et al 2000, 136). European democracies were all within the income range of between $1,500 and $3,500 per capita income, and Belgium, Czechoslovakia, and Finland were no exception to this rule (Ertman 1998).[3] Staying on the importance of economic variables for regime stability for a moment, the old argument connecting survival and breakdown of interwar European democracies to the economic severity and social consequences of the Depression has long been recognized to be far from univocal: the gravity of the economic crisis can only have had an indirect impact on democratic survival at best (e.g., Rueschemeyer, Huber Stephens, and Stephens 1992, 279). The same can be said about policy responses to the Depression: variables such as change in industrial production, levels and changes in unemployment or GDP and the like do not explain anything about the three cases of survival and the two cases of breakdown analyzed here (e.g., Saalfeld 2002; see also Zimmermann 1987).

The importance of a favorable international environment to make democracy survive is underlined, among others, by Huntington (1991)—but again, the international environment after 1918 was, if anything, a terrible one in which to sustain democracy in Europe: the League of Nations was mostly ineffectual; the United States was isolationist; and the United Kingdom and France, the largest and oldest democracies in the area, were made substantially impotent and famously conflict-averse by World War I.[4] According to Moore's thesis on the social origins of dictatorship and democracy as well, the influence of the international environment should be the decisive factor in determining the fate of democracy in Czechoslovakia, Finland, and Belgium. Moore's thesis, in its original form, held that only the political development of large countries is primarily dependent on internal factors: small countries are economically and politically dependent on their larger neighbors—therefore "the decisive causes of their politics lie outside their own boundaries" (Moore 1966,

xiii). To be sure, big powers influence smaller neighboring countries, but whether they can have a direct impact on their regimes in the short or even medium term remains doubtful. Left unexplained is how democracy survived for so long in Czechoslovakia, for example, yielding not to internal breakdown but only to external conquest in 1938, and Finland, which resisted bolshevization despite having a difficult neighbor in the Soviet Union. In Belgium, the proximity of *Front Populaire*–era France, if anything, fueled the extreme right backlash during the 1936–37 crisis more than the internal leftist threat did.

A substantially modified version of Moore's thesis on the power of the traditional landed class, the commercialization of agriculture, and the rise of the bourgeoisie in steering a country towards a democratic or autocratic outcome (Moore 1966) has been applied to small countries by other authors, who, while retaining Moore's framework, have emphasized the role of the working class in support of democratization (Stephens 1989; Rueschemeyer, Huber Stephens, and Stephens 1992; Stephens and Kümmel 2002). Again, two of our cases do not fit easily into their explanation. For example, in this approach persistence of democracy in Finland is explained by the absence of a strong landed class: small landowners had been socialized to democracy by the Agrarian Party and hence constituted the main bulwark against the danger of breakdown (Rueschemeyer, Huber Stephens, and Stephens 1992).[5] This, however, is hardly convincing: small landowners were involved in supporting the Lapua Movement as much as other sectors of "White" Finland and probably more, to the extent that the elite of the Agrarian Party had to yield to the extremist push coming from its base in the early phase of the crisis, and recovered autonomy of action only at a later stage (e.g., Karvonen 1999).[6] Czechoslovakia constitutes an outlier for this thesis too: from the nineteenth century until the end of the Habsburg era, the region was characterized by the existence of a strong landed elite, a factor which should have favored the emergence of authoritarianism. So the authors explain the survival of democracy in Czechoslovakia until 1938 with ad hoc arguments, such as the newness of the army, the fact that the Czech elites were "relatively more liberal" than average, and "the strength of the working class" (Stephens and Kümmel 2002, 56).[7]

Luebbert's structuralist interpretation of European political development, according to which the political and economic regimes of interwar European countries were mere reflections of patterns of class alliances that were "deterministically" produced by developments before the war, is a very important contributions to the field (Luebbert 1987, 1991). This is not the place to discuss

the many insights of Luebbert's theory or to go into the merits of the critiques that have been leveled against it (e.g., Stephens 1989; Ertman 1998), but rather to show briefly how again the survival of democracy in some of our cases does not fit well with his theory. Interwar Czechoslovakia, for example, is classified as a case of "social democracy" (a society characterized by a political economy in which political pluralism was accompanied by corporatist arrangements for the determination of wages and profits) but, according to Luebbert himself, the case presents only some of the characteristics of the type. Although the country was run for most of the interwar years by a coalition of agrarian and social democratic forces (typical of the other cases in the class), Czechoslovakia did not develop the corporatist institutions that constitute one of the key characteristics of other social democratic political economies. Like Stephens and Kümmel do in order to account for survival of democracy in Finland, Luebbert resorts to a counterfactual: his argument is that had Czechoslovakia not been invaded by Germany in 1938, it would have developed such institutions (Luebbert 1991, 291).[8] On the other hand, Luebbert considers Finland to be an example of "traditional dictatorship," which, as we have seen, is rather unconvincing: the presence of militant norms enacted against the Communist Party would disqualify as a democracy not only Czechoslovakia itself, where if anything anti-extremist legislation was even stricter than in Finland, but several other countries (e.g., Fox and Nolte 1995; Finn 2001).[9]

Our cases are not particularly easy to explain for some nonstructuralist approaches either. The role of the military, for example, has often been placed at the center of the explanation of democratic breakdowns in Latin America, Europe, and elsewhere. Most recently Bermeo, for example, although considering elite polarization as an important factor in causing the breakdown of democracy, has emphasized that it is the military that decides, directly or indirectly, on the fate of the regime during a crisis: if it perceives that civilian elites are unable to keep polarization at bay, and even allow it to threaten the military itself as an institution, it is likely to turn against democracy and cause breakdown (Bermeo 2003, 250). While the role of the military is certainly important, their defection from democratic loyalty and democratic breakdown (and analogously their cooperation with democratic forces and democratic survival) do not, however, always go together in the cases analyzed here, and Finland and Italy do constitute partial but significant exceptions in either direction. In Finland, large sectors of the military supported Lapua, and it was mainly the determination of Svinhufvud and Sihvo that managed to keep the

army under control.[10] In Italy, on the other hand, the factions within the military establishment in favor of an authoritarian regime were definitely in the minority, and loyalty to the king prevailed. The Fascists did all they could to attract the support of the military (e.g., Dorso 1949) and to influence the decisions of the king, but the most powerful military circles certainly did not significantly attempt to push for regime change against the will of the monarchy. Much more decisive than concerns on the loyalty of the army were the divisions and the backroom maneuvering in the political class that made Vittorio Emanuele III fear that the government would not be able to rise to the challenge of a frontal political clash with the Fascist movement. The same dynamic led the king to refuse to endorse the military reaction proposed by the government in 1922 to stop the March on Rome and Mussolini's ascent to power.[11] Moreover, Finland constitutes a startling exception to the thesis of those authors who have emphasized the role of political violence in the process of democratic breakdown (e.g., Farneti 1978). In Finland, no technique from the grim repertoire of Fascist violence typical of Italy and Germany before the breakdown—a march on the capital city, the kidnapping of prominent public figures, the attacks against members and installations of other parties—was spared. Finland was also characterized to some degree by what has often been considered a direct consequence of widespread political violence, namely the politicization of neutral institutions (military, bureaucracy, magistracy) that in many cases looked favorably on the Fascist actions as "patriotic" (e.g., Tarchi 2002). And yet democracy survived.

Thus, Czechoslovakia, Finland, and in some instances Belgium constitute outliers for many structural and nonstructural theories, thus showing that other variables, in particular the importance of political actors, need to be taken into account more systematically in explaining democratic survival and breakdown in interwar Europe. To support this point of view, we don't need to go back to Vico's *Scienza Nuova* and his observations on the origins of societies and polities—actors and political elites can be important for the destiny of democracy in a much more direct way. And some recent studies have ventured into this direction. Berg-Schlosser, for example, in summarizing the general findings of a broad comparative study on interwar Europe, includes the impact of political actors in the general explanation as a complement to structural analysis (Berg-Schlosser 1998, 2002). In his account, however, the importance of actors is measured on the basis of expert-based numerical scores given in aggregate to each country, which leaves unanswered, at least at the comparative

level of analysis, the important questions of which actors were important, when, and why. Bermeo's study on democratic crises in Latin America and interwar Europe focuses on the importance of elites, both political and military, in causing democratic breakdown, accounting for it by means of detailed and theory-driven narratives, which seems a useful approach, not unlike the one adopted in this book (Bermeo 2003). More research is certainly needed to develop more encompassing theoretical frameworks that account for the role of actors during crises in different historical and political contexts, their freedom of action and constraints, and the consequences of their decisions.

Theoretical Issues in Actor-based Analyses: Crises, Contingency, and Counterfactuals

Incorporating the impact of key political actors in our analyses of political development, however it is done, has several important theoretical consequences. First of all, it implies bringing systematically into the picture the analysis of contingent factors, something that structural approaches, in their search for "large" causes to explain "large" phenomena, are ill-placed to do. Reducing history to impersonal causes, in fact, fatally gives rise to "a deterministic version of the past that lends a spurious air of high probability to what happened and blots out the effects of contingency that spring from immediate circumstances and individual choices" (Turner 1999, 305). Affected by this "certainty of hindsight bias," structural explanations "fail to recognize the uncertainty under which actors operated and the possibility that they could have made different choices that might have led to different outcomes" (Lebow 2000b, 559; see also Sewell 1992, 2, and, obviously, Linz 1978a). Indeed, there seems to be no reason why the "dogma of Large-Large" should be true: without going into the arguments brought against it by a longstanding tradition of antideterministic thought in the philosophy of history (see for example the debate in Gardiner 1974 and, more recently, MacCloskey 1991; Shermer 1995), this view is increasingly coming under severe criticism in comparative historical sociology and political science.

Most of the recent literature on institutional change, for example, shares the view that "large" developments need not be the result of structural configurations, but can emerge from "small" and contingent events. This literature is implicitly or explicitly based on a view of political development that includes two distinct moments: "critical junctures," on the one hand, and periods of stability, or incremental change, on the other (e.g., Berins Collier and Collier

1991; Thelen 1999; Mahoney 2000; Pierson 2000a and b, 2003).[12] "Critical junctures," variously called "crises," "turning points," and so on, are in essence short phases of social and political instability or fluidity in which "several things might happen but only one actually does" (Gourevitch 1986, 9). In those phases, decisions of political actors and contingent events in general can make a large difference: the range of options available to actors broadens considerably, as does the potential reach of the consequences of their decisions (Gourevitch 1986, 24, 238–39). Despite his skepticism of a sharp distinction between "stable" and "crisis" times, Katznelson is particularly illuminating: "At critical junctures, the gap between the hypothetical and the optional is reduced, often dramatically, because what Arthur Stinchcombe calls 'the moral value of the status quo' . . . has been called into question and when, to borrow a phrase from E. E. Schattschneider, 'scope and bias' of the political system come to be at stake. In such circumstances, many constraints on agency are broken or relaxed and opportunities expand so that purposive action may be especially consequential" (Katznelson 2003, 282-83). Structural approaches do not help much in accounting for events and decisions during critical phases: narrative, guided by an explicit theoretical framework, is required.[13]

The moment of institutional crystallization that concludes a phase of fluidity marks the beginning of a historical sequence, a phase of stability or of incremental change characterized by path-dependent mechanisms of institutional reproduction which tend to constrain the range of possible change potentially for a long time (e.g., Thelen 1999; Mahoney 2000; Pierson 2000a). Structural approaches are probably more compelling for the analysis of those phases in which cultural, social, and psychological constraints on the actors regain their conditioning force and reduce both the range and the impact of their choices: strong or weak personalities, skilled or unskilled decision-makers—in principle they make less difference during stable phases than during a crisis.[14]

Given the definitions above, it is certainly possible to consider the situations in Italy in the early 1920s and Germany in the early 1930s, as well as the political and social reality of Belgium between 1936 and 1939, Czechoslovakia between 1933 and 1938, and Finland between 1930 and 1932, as examples of "critical" times in which the social and political bases of the democratic regimes were seriously shaken. Only in two of those cases, though, did the crisis result in regime change or, to use the language of this literature, did the outcome of the crisis put the system on a different historical path. Yet actors and their con-

tingent decisions were certainly at least as influential on the final outcome in Czechoslovakia, Finland, and Belgium as they were in the cases of breakdown. This circumstance draws our attention to the fact that if we want to take contingency seriously in analyzing political development, then we have to consider the possibility that some crises do not result in change but rather in re-equilibration.[15] In other words, incorporating actors in the analysis of political development implies, on the one hand, the theoretical identification of the conditions in which they can have the largest impact (the crises) and, on the other, the systematic incorporation of contingency in the analyses, rather than treating it as an ad hoc complementary factor. In this latter respect, if contingency is what characterizes a critical juncture and if social and political instability is what makes the choices of political actors have profound consequences, there is no *a priori* reason why we should not consider reestablishment of the status quo or aborted change as one of the possible outcomes of the crisis. Taking contingency into account, however difficult, means analyzing "what happened in the context of what could have happened" (Berlin 1974, 176), a task for which we have to invert our perspective of analysis from one of hindsight—typical of most literature in the field—to one of foresight.[16] That takes us to the next issue in the theoretical framing of the impact of actors on the outcome of political crises: counterfactual analysis.

Several authors have highlighted the connection between the analysis of contingency during critical junctures and counterfactual thought experiments. So, for example, Mahoney:

> Critical junctures are characterized by the adoption of a particular institutional arrangement from among two or more alternatives. . . . Critical junctures are often assessed through counterfactual analysis in which investigators imagine an alternative option had been selected and attempt to rerun history accordingly. Such counterfactual thought experiment can illustrate the importance of a critical juncture by showing that the selection of an alternative option would have led to a dramatically different final outcome. This kind of counterfactual analysis is especially persuasive when the investigator explores as a counterfactual antecedent an option that was predicted by theory to be selected, but that was not in fact selected. In doing so, the investigator avoids meaningless "what if" counterfactual analysis by considering a counterfactual antecedent that was actually available during a critical juncture period, and that, according to theory, should have been adopted. (Mahoney 2000, 513)

In addition to establishing a direct connection between the analysis of contingency in critical junctures and counterfactual thought experiments, Mahoney identifies a very important criterion to assess the *plausibility* of counterfactual arguments: theoretical consistency. This criterion is satisfied in the present analysis (breakdown in Belgium, Czechoslovakia, and Finland could certainly be expected, at least in probabilistic terms, on the basis of Sartori's polarization model), as are the other additional criteria recently identified in the literature, among them clarity, logical consistency, historical consistency (Fearon 1991; Tetlock and Belkin 1996; Lebow 2000b).[17] Key events in our cases—such as, for example, the summoning of all main party and faction leaders by King Leopold III of Belgium in June 1936 to break the political stalemate that had left the country without a government for a month during a severe crisis; Svinhufvud's prompt reaction in Finland to the Mäntsäla insurrection between the end of February and the beginning of March 1932; the timely political alliance of Masaryk and Beneš in Czechoslovakia with their former enemy Milan Hodža in 1931—do in fact respect these criteria. But the more general point here is that the systematic incorporation of the influence of political actors in the analysis of political development has as its ultimate consequence that of taking counterfactual analysis much more seriously than comparative politics has done so far. Counterfactual reasoning is often implicit in many arguments, indeed at times it is used, as noted above, in the context of non-actor-based approaches, often in an ad hoc fashion in order to make sense of "difficult" cases. It seems that, at least in the analysis of situations of crisis and instability, the systematic incorporation of actors' decisions and their consequences in our frameworks includes as a necessary step that of making counterfactual scenarios much more explicit—and equally explicitly testing their logical, theoretical, and empirical plausibility.[18]

To sum up on this subject, this book has endeavored to improve the understanding of the process of democratic crisis and breakdown through the use of comparison, focusing attention on the cases in which the crisis, although presenting all the characteristics that led other democracies to collapse, did not result in the end of democratic rule. The processes of crisis and breakdown should be considered separately, and the analysis of the former without the latter can make an important contribution to the study of breakdowns themselves, shedding light on a facet of the crisis process that had been only partially considered so far (or considered only when it failed)—to wit, the resistance of incumbents to the challenge brought about by the enemies of the regime.

Analysis of the political crises in Czechoslovakia, Belgium, and Finland shows the importance of such resistance in ensuring the persistence of democracy, a finding corroborated by democratic survival in all or some of these cases that is not easily explained by the existing, mainly structuralist, alternative frameworks. That the same cases can be seen as "outliers" of most structural theories calls for the more systematic incorporation of dynamic factors in our analyses of political development than has been the case thus far. This has several theoretical consequences that need to be considered if we are to avoid using the impact of political actors as a merely ad hoc and residual variable: first of all, the theoretically explicit identification of moments of "crisis," that is, phases in which the exceptional level of social and political instability enlarges the range of choices available to political and institutional actors and makes their consequences more momentous. A further important issue is the analysis of contingency, which involves correcting the "hindsight bias" typical of many existing theoretical approaches and changing our perspective to a foresight one, in order to be able to consider in full all the options that were open to actors and their possible consequences. Finally, counterfactual scenarios must be considered more explicitly and their plausibility from the logical, theoretical, and empirical viewpoints tested more accurately. The proper theoretical and methodological deepening of these issues constitutes a challenge for future research and theoretical speculation in comparative politics; here we can only flag them as important intellectual challenges to "advance our understanding of processes of political change" by undertaking the "execution of mental experiments" invoked by Linz in his seminal study (1978a, 90).

New Research Directions on Democracy and Extremism

These are not the only research challenges that lie ahead of us in this area: another important research task is to analyze reactions to extremism in contexts other than interwar Europe. There is little doubt on the relevance of the problem of reacting to internal enemies for contemporary democracies. The challenge posed by national and international terrorism, both now and in the recent past, has been extensively researched and is well known (e.g., Della Porta 1995; Schmid and Crelinsten 1998; Reinares 2000; Wilkinson 2001). Although some of the responses to terrorism may overlap with the measures taken against "peaceful" extremism, terrorism poses a series of problems to democratic governments, mainly related to the systematic use of political vio-

lence and in some cases to international connections, that are specific to the phenomenon in question. In consequence, it is difficult to apply the theoretical frameworks used to analyze that phenomenon to the much less researched problem of responding to nonviolent extremism, by no means absent from the political agenda of contemporary democracies. If most of the European totalitarian movements and parties of the past have faded into insignificance, having either radically changed their ideologies or been reduced to the status of marginal groups, new forms of radicalism have emerged to challenge the stability of democratic regimes. Just to give a few random examples: in Germany, the strong system of legal protection of the liberal-democratic order against extremists has been very recently reactivated against an extreme right-wing party, the National-Democratic Party of Germany (*Nationaldemokratische Partei Deutschlands,* NPD). In 1988 the Israeli Supreme Court confirmed the administrative decision of the Election Commission to exclude a small extreme right-wing formation called the Kach Party from the elections (e.g., Gordon 1987). Many new democracies of Eastern Europe including Croatia, Poland, Lithuania, Romania, Slovenia, and Bulgaria have included in their democratic constitutions rules limiting political pluralism with the goal of protecting the integrity and viability of the state (Fox and Nolte 1995). The most recent example of this kind probably comes from Spain, where the Parliament recently passed a new organic law on political parties (Ley Organica 6/2002 of 27 June 2002) outlawing parties that attack the democratic regime, promote racism or xenophobia, or support terrorist organizations. The Basque independentist *Batasuna* party was banned shortly afterwards on the basis of this legislation. At the same time, newly liberalizing states are affected by the challenge of Islamic fundamentalism, as the Algerian crisis of the 1990s and the repeated military interventions in Turkey over the last decades show.

The old problem of striking the right balance between the two poles of "no freedom for the enemies of freedom" and "real freedom is freedom to dissent" is thus still high on the agenda of constitutional lawyers and political theorists.[19] Despite its clear political importance and its eminently political nature, though, the problem of the politics of legal-institutional reactions to extremists has rarely been analyzed with the tools of comparative political science.[20] What we know about it is in fact largely the product of constitutional law (e.g., Bulla 1973; Lameyer 1978; Denninger 1983) or normative theoretical studies (e.g., Friedrich 1957; Leibholz 1973) and is often limited to a single case study.[21]

No comparative studies of the *politics* of institutional "defense of democracy" are available, and the existing scattered literature deals primarily with a few important (and controversial) cases, in particular the *streitbare Demokratie* system in the Federal Republic of Germany and anti-Communist legislation in the United States.[22] Thus, comparative politics is still a long way from achieving a systematic and cumulative knowledge of the problems connected with the determinants and consequences of institutional and political reactions to extremism in democratic systems. The existing literature needs to be complemented in several important respects. This book has contributed to reducing the gaps in areas such as the conceptualization and typologization of anti-extremist reactions and expanding the analysis beyond the narrow set of familiar cases to more obscure democratic regimes with interesting features that illuminate the problem.[23] But much remains to be done in order to achieve a substantive, cumulative, and reliable knowledge of the defense of democracy in contemporary democracies. Perhaps the general framework of analysis used in this book will provide a starting point to research the phenomenon in contexts other than interwar Europe, or at least to identify the main research challenges that lie ahead of us in the field.

In essence, the analysis of the interwar experience showed that successful reactions to extremism essentially consisted of a three-step process: first, the antisystem challenge was recognized and perceived as such; second, significant defection from the prosystem front was avoided or blocked and extremists were politically isolated; third, actual strategies of short-term defense, normally a mix of repression and accommodation, were enacted. Can this three-step model, *mutatis mutandis,* offer a theoretical grid to start thinking about the same phenomenon in contemporary European democracies or in the new democratic regimes that have recently emerged in different parts of the globe? What insights does it offer, and what pitfalls does it conceal? The rest of this section offers some initial reflections on possible lines of analysis, identifying avenues of future research in the field.

In the struggle against both terrorism and nonviolent domestic extremism, the response problem is first of all a "definition problem" (Schmid 1988). Given the essentially contested nature of the concepts of "democracy" (e.g., Gallie 1956) and "extremism"—the banal notion that "extremism, like beauty, lies in the eyes of the beholder" comes to mind—exactly this seems to be the first challenge for comparativists wanting to venture in the area. The concept of "ideological anti-systemness," discussed in chapter 2, unites the contested-

ness of both concepts and tries to solve the problems that this represents for empirical comparative analysis. In this respect, there is a marked difference between interwar and contemporary Europe. In interwar Europe, the identification of an antisystem challenge posed—relatively speaking—fewer problems than it does now: ideologies and models alternative to democracy were available and flourishing on the political market, and the "ideological antisystemness" of extremist parties overlapped with outright opposition to the basic, minimal characteristics of pluralist democracy. From the point of view of the political actors involved, the distinction between the two fronts, democratic and antidemocratic, even discounting the newness of the challenges and all of the ambiguities that characterized party politics, was certainly clearer than it is now. As a consequence, the stake of the struggle between democrats and those holding antidemocratic beliefs, namely the persistence of democratic institutions, was relatively clear as well. From the point of view of the analyst, this means that one can effectively compare, as in this book, different antisystem parties in different countries on the basis of their common opposition to a "minimal-procedural" model of democracy.

In today's advanced democracies in Europe and other regions, the situation is more complex. While remnants of the old totalitarian ideologies of Communism, Nazism, and Fascism are still to be found in fringe groups and some small parties, it is quite clear that the new forms of extremism that have emerged to polarize the party systems of European democracies in most cases have rather tenuous links with their distant ancestors (e.g., Ignazi 1992, 1994; Mudde 2002). Take for example the parties and groups that have emerged at the right end of the spectrum of many European democracies over the last quarter century—much of what can be said will apply to contemporary extremist left-wing parties as well. The "controlling goals" as well as the propaganda messages of the "new extreme right-wing parties" vary quite considerably across countries, and it is difficult to establish a common ideological core. Whether they want more "law-and-order"–oriented security policies or hold "welfare-chauvinist" positions, as the Scandinavian Progress Parties in some phases of their existence have, or wish to put a stop to immigration, as the recent List Pim Fortuyn in the Netherlands, or express "anti-EU" views, or all these positions in some mix, such as, for example, the French *Front National,* most of them would not be considered antidemocratic ("ideologically antisystem") if we took as our reference the same "minimal-procedural" definition of democracy used above. True, one could certainly make the argument that in

contemporary Europe our conception of democracy has changed, and that its "minimal" set of characteristics has expanded, including, for example, social rights, racial and gender equality, rights of minorities and immigrants, and so on. Yet exactly this broadening of the intension of the concept is likely to increase its contestedness, on the one hand, and shrink its extension, that is, the applicability to specific cases, on the other, making comparisons more difficult (Capoccia 2002a).

To be more specific on the point, the new extremist parties may indeed (and often do) present the characteristic of *relational* anti-systemness, encouraging defection from the political center, but their ideological anti-systemness will depend on the definition of democracy that we adopt. As discussed in chapter 2, ideological anti-systemness refers, by its very nature, to a negative phenomenon—it concerns the question of whether a party opposes a certain political object. This has two important consequences for conceptual reconstruction. First of all, a party need not oppose all of the characteristics of the system in question to qualify as being antisystem: opposing only one of them is sufficient. A second, important consequence is that reconstructing a negative term through its positive referents involves different units of analysis. So while the positive term "system" refers to *polities,* the negative term "antisystem" refers to *parties* (or groups) operating within such polities. This is important because the inverse relation between intension and extension typical of the "ladder of generality" (Sartori 1970, 1984a; Collier and Mahon 1993) regards only the positive term (system) and not the negative term (antisystem). Conventionally, the number of cases (extension) to which the concept of system is applied will be reduced as the number of defining characteristics (intension) expands. Since to be antisystem it is enough to be against only one of the characteristics of the system, new cases of antisystem parties that were not included before can be included at lower levels of generality, while other cases could be excluded even though they were included at some higher level of abstraction. All this has consequences for the use of the concept in comparative analyses, since the number of cases which fall within the definition of the positive term also determines the scope of applicability of the negative term. This can be further clarified if we note that the positive term can be defined at lower levels of abstraction by enriching the minimal procedural definition of democracy with further characteristics, such as, for example, the need to respect social and cultural rights (beyond the civil and political rights of the citizenry necessarily implied in procedural definitions). While such a concept

would be inapplicable to many of the recent third-wave democracies, it would certainly reflect the legitimate normative aspirations associated with the older democracies of today, European or not. The inclusion of such rights as a necessary part of the definition of democracy itself would obviously reduce the traveling capacity of the concept. Nevertheless, such an expanded definition of democracy would clearly increase the potential number of ideologically antisystem parties. To give a simple example, a party opposing the extension of social and economic rights embedded in a very advanced form of welfare state will be antisystem in this sense in those systems responding to a definition of democracy encompassing such rights, but not in others. Thus the Norwegian Progress Party (*Fremskrittparti*) in the 1980s, which opposed the prevailing form of welfare redistribution but not the minimal characteristics of democracy (Ignazi 1994, 88), would be regarded as ideologically antisystem (that is, as antidemocratic) under this expanded definition of democracy. Conversely, it would not be possible to regard a party with a similar ideological profile as being ideologically antisystem, say, in the British context of the 1980s or in the American context, since these cases would not in themselves meet the criteria of the expanded definition—that is, a definition including substantial welfare redistribution and advanced social entitlements. In a similar way, a more abstract and less connotative definition of democracy would include more countries, but at the same time would thereby reduce the number of parties capable of being classified as ideologically antisystem. (For more on this, see Capoccia 2002a.)

Thus, the emergence of different forms of extremism has important consequences for the possibility of studying responses to extremist challenges to democracy comparatively, as the definition of democracy adopted might not fit all the cases in the sample. While this is an important problem for comparative analysis, it does not seem to dictate abandoning comparisons altogether and reverting to single case studies. Rather, it poses a problem of time- and space-bounded comparisons and definitions that are both general and context-sensitive enough to allow comparison without losing sight of the real political struggle in each country. The choice of which comparisons and which definitions would be a matter for the specific research projects, but every choice is likely to have to deal with the practical and conceptual dilemmas described above.[24]

The differentiation among the new forms of extremism in modern democracies has important consequences for the analysis of political and institu-

tional reactions to them—most of all, how to assess the coalitional strategies of mainstream parties vis-à-vis extremist ones, a key aspect in the political dynamics of defense. The verdict of the interwar years in this respect is clear: distancing from and segregating antisystem parties and fighting defection from their own ranks were superior strategies for the political forces constituting the democratic establishment. Including extremists in a government coalition, on the other hand, often proved lethal for the democratic system. In contemporary Europe, things are different: segregation and exclusion have prevailed in some cases, such as in France vis-à-vis the *Front National.* Conversely, full inclusion has occurred in other countries, like in Austria vis-à-vis the Austrian Freedom Party (*Freiheitliche Partei Österreichs,* FPÖ). There also exist examples of intermediate solutions such as allowing the extremists to support the government from outside or forming coalitions at the regional level. None of these different strategies has so far shown a clear superiority over the others in terms of reducing the strength or the threat of the "new extremists." But none of them has been clearly inferior either: including the Austrian FPÖ, or the Dutch LPF in government, for example, may have been one of the causes of their recent electoral decline.[25] The constant exclusion of extreme right parties such as the NDP or the *Deutsche Volksunion* (DVU) in Germany, at both the national and regional levels, also appears have worked, however. This situation suggests a radical difference with interwar Europe that is probably too early—and about which we know too little—to assess in all its implications. It seems likely, though, that the inclusion of some of those parties in governmental alliances, tactical or not, is possible exactly because they are not against democracy tout court, against the very institutions of constitutional and representative government, as the interwar extremists decidedly were. Their difference from the mainstream parties is based instead on specific—however important and qualifying—policies, for example on immigration, cultural rights of minorities or social redistribution, and it is probably easier, relatively speaking, for established forces to find a compromise on these matters that keeps the government's platform within the boundaries of acceptable democratic standards. This was the result, for example, of the investigation conducted on the Austrian government in 2000, after the inclusion of the FPÖ in the ruling coalition, by the "three wise men," whom the other fourteen EU member states had given the task of ascertaining whether the inclusion of an extreme right-wing party in the government of an EU member state would endanger human rights in that country (e.g., Merlingen, Mudde, and Sedel-

meier 2000).[26] But questions such as, for example, how these compromises are reached, why they are possible in some countries but not in others, what standards of democracy should be applied to different policy areas, whether inclusion or exclusion of extremists is advisable and in which conditions—these still remain largely unanswered and require systematic research.

Finally, the changing nature of extremism in advanced democracies has implications for the kind of institutional reactions, in particular repressive ones, that the rise of those parties has triggered in many countries. In fact, although the mobilization of civil society has played an important role in some cases—for example, in the extensive street demonstrations against the Front National leader Jean-Marie Le Pen before the second round of the 2002 presidential elections, or recently in Sweden (e.g., Windfeldt 2001)—the role played by state repression (or deterrence) via special legislation still seems to be key in many countries. As mentioned above, extremist parties have recently been under scrutiny or banned in Spain, Germany, even the tolerant Netherlands (van Holsteyn 2003) as well as other countries in both Western and Eastern Europe, and the list of repressive acts enacted against extremist *groups* is much longer (e.g., Finn 1991, 2001). Are European democracies becoming "militant," despite the different ideological nature of most extremist challengers when compared to their interwar predecessors? In other words, may we be witnessing a strengthening of repressive defense exactly when the restriction of the possibility of political participation to certain actors is less easy to justify normatively—again, at least in comparison with the interwar years? Further research is definitely needed to answer these questions, too.

If this turns out to be true, it would have important normative implications: the old justification of repression of the "enemies of the institutions that provide and guarantee freedoms and rights" on the basis that they have no right to exploit those freedoms and rights in order to bring about the demise of the very institutions that guarantee them—such a rationalization would be applicable to at least some of the new extremists only with difficulty. If, normatively speaking, repression could certainly be justified by "updating" the dilemma by referring to an expanded definition of democracy, there would still remain empirical questions. In fact, other causes may be contributing to producing the same phenomenon, and these need to be systematically investigated as well. One of them is probably inertia, namely dealing with present challenges in exactly the same way in which challenges have always been dealt with, despite whatever differences they may present. Inertia is quite a compel-

ling candidate to provide at least part of the explanation for the continuous resort to repression by some democratic governments, as it seems to be supported by at least two powerful mechanisms: laws and court rulings. Some anti-extremist laws are provisional and have an expiration date, but for others this is not true, so they tend to remain in force, possibly unused for many years, after the challenge that they were supposed to respond to has waned, and may be revived when new and unexpected challenges emerge. This was the case of the Habsburg law on associations used by the Czechoslovak courts in 1933 to ban the DNSAP and the DNP, but there are more recent examples: in Austria, the "Law on the Protection of the State" (law 223/1936) passed in 1936 by the authoritarian government remained in force until 1975, about thirty years past the transition to democracy that occurred after World War II (Vetschera 1998). Similarly, court rulings are by definition path-dependent: in both Roman and Common Law systems, despite the differences between the two, judges having to issue a new ruling look to past ones for precedent. Although the stance of the courts on specific issues does evolve over the years, innovation is normally restricted and incremental, and past cases have quite a large influence on new ones. We know very little on the evolution of special legislation and court rulings on politically "sensitive" areas such as basic freedoms (expression, association, religion, assembly, and so on) in European democracies over the past decades, and how these have interacted with the development of extremism, both in ideological terms and in terms of its electoral and political strength.[27]

Related to the question of inertia is the issue of political learning. Despite its importance in many areas of political activity, political learning in general is a very understudied topic, and the analysis of reactions to extremism is no exception in this respect. The memory of some particularly traumatic experiences from precisely the interwar European experience, most of all the fall of Weimar, has substantially influenced how reactions to extremism have evolved in later years, both in Europe and elsewhere. There is no single agreed definition of political learning, although many existing definitions overlap to some degree.[28] Conceptual inconsistencies aside, our empirical knowledge is, again, very unequal across cases: if, for example, the "negative impact" of the Weimar experience on the drafting of the system of constitutional protection of democracy (*streitbare Demokratie*) included in the Basic Law of the German Federal Republic is well known (e.g., Levitt 1993; Starck 1983; Karpen 1983), we know far less about how similar considerations have played a role in other

countries, be this in the drafting of the constitution or in making momentous political decisions vis-à-vis suspected enemies of democracy. Furthermore, anecdotal evidence shows the importance of learning "by diffusion," namely how much the experience of some countries weighs on the later choices of politicians in other countries (e.g., Rueschemeyer, Huber Stephens, and Stephens 1992, 372)—but we are far from achieving any systematic evidence of this phenomenon as well.

The negative example of Weimar was certainly clear in the mind of some of the delegates at the United Nations in the debate about the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, in particular about the "general protection clause," then included in its article 30 (Fox and Nolte 1995). This example raises a further aspect of the complex politics of reactions to extremism in contemporary democracies that badly needs further investigation: the importance of international and supranational institutions. The investigation on the Austrian government mentioned above has led to the formalization of the procedure of scrutiny used in that case in the Nice Treaty (in the new article 7 that the new treaty introduced in the European Union Treaty), an element suggesting that experiences of this kind might occur again in the future, enlarged European Union.[29] The protection of rights and their limitation for "defensive" reasons, topics included in international documents such as the European Convention of Human Rights, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the Political Covenant for Civil and Political Rights, and others, these have long been practically dormant and irrelevant for internal political dynamics. At its simplest, the main reason for this has been the fundamental disagreement over what the notion of "democracy" entailed, having to suit both "Western" and "popular" (Communist) democracies. However, after the collapse of international Communism, a sufficiently general agreement on at least a minimal "procedural" conception of democracy has become more possible, and international documents providing for democratic rights have suddenly become enforceable, at least in principle. The debate on this matter is very recent in international law and has not yet reached the field of international and comparative political studies (e.g., Fox and Roth 2000). Yet it seems easy to predict that the supranational (in the EU) and international (both in Europe and elsewhere) environments will become increasingly important in determining the internal balance of tolerance and intolerance, the guarantees and limitations of rights at the heart of reactions to extremist tendencies in contemporary democracies. Banned parties, outlawed associations, or individuals af-

fected by repressive measures for political reasons, will be able to appeal to international courts as they have done in the past, but now the rulings of those courts, as well as the international treaties establishing and protecting human rights, can acquire a much higher importance in the domestic interaction between democracy and various forms of extremism, at least—and possibly not exclusively—at the symbolic level. It is too early to say what their impact will be, and how they will interact with internal defensive measures—whether, for example, they will legitimize some repressive practices and restrain others, or whether they will favor accommodative strategies, and vis-à-vis which form of extremism, and so on—but it will be difficult for future research on domestic responses to extremism not to give the international environment the importance that it deserves.

In sum, comparative politics has not yet achieved even a minimally systematic knowledge of the complex phenomenon of reactions to extremism in democracies, from both a comparative and a historical point of view. We have a very limited knowledge about many cases, contemporary and historical, and we don't yet have a nearly sophisticated enough conceptual apparatus that can handle the empirical complexity and do justice to the normative sensitivity of the phenomenon. The questions posed above, and other, related ones, can probably constitute first steps in the formation of this new research agenda on a complex and important political phenomenon.

Conclusion: Democratic Leadership and Reactions to Extremism

Whatever the ways that new research will investigate reactions to extremism in contemporary democracies, it will not be able to do so without according due importance to its main protagonists: the politicians. Defending democracy, however minimally or broadly defined, means to strike an extremely difficult balance between intolerance and tolerance, inclusion and exclusion, protecting and limiting rights, and short- and long-term imperatives—to decide which is the "right" one to keep democracy on course at a specific time and place. In this hard task, much depends on the quality of the political leaders and their advisers: democracies cannot survive without skilled democrats.

However, "skilled" does not necessarily mean charismatic, nor does it necessarily mean able "to lead their party and their party's allies" (Bermeo 2003, 251–52). Charismatic democratic leaders were not necessary to defend democ-

racy even in the "domestic political maelstrom" that characterized the internal politics of many European democracies during the interwar years.[30] If charismatic antidemocratic leaders such as Hitler and Mussolini could prevail against fragile and probably less politically skilled democratic opponents, it would be simplistic to discard the political skills and magnetic personalities of the defeated extremist leaders Degrelle, Henlein, and Kosola in Belgium, Czechoslovakia, and Finland, respectively, and at the same time attribute their political defeat to the "charismatic" qualities of the leaders of the democratic fronts in those countries. First of all, one would be forced to ponder how much "hindsight bias" there would be in such negative judgments, how much the ultimate defeat of the political projects of the extremists colors our evaluation. Second, and more important, that they were opposed by charismatic leaders that were capable, by virtue of their charisma alone, of leading a front of democratic forces, is not supported by the evidence.

To begin with, there can be little doubt that President Thomas Masaryk, considered the founding father of modern Czechoslovakia and the herald of the nation within and abroad, possessed a charismatic personality and was respected not only by his allies but also by his political adversaries (e.g., Zeman 1976). But since he died in 1935, he never even saw the worst part of the political crisis that swept his country in 1935–38; moreover, he had been incapable of acting effectively in politics after 1934, when he suffered a stroke that paralyzed half of his body and impaired his eyesight. He resigned in 1935, and was succeeded in office by his pupil and collaborator Edvard Beneš. Although a man of vast political experience, having been foreign minister since the foundation of independent Czechoslovakia, Beneš could not match his master's personal and political prestige.[31] The other decisive democratic leader in the Czechoslovak democratic front during the crisis was Milan Hodža, hardly a charismatic leader in any respect: an experienced politician, formerly an enemy of the Castle, he forged an alliance with Masaryk and Beneš in 1931 mainly to save his political career and personal public reputation—with serious gambling debts to repay, he offered his political support to the Castle in exchange for financial help and political backing—rather than for some grand political vision. Finnish President Pehr Evind Svinhufvud is a partial exception. He was certainly a charismatic leader—indeed, his intervention in constraining the Lapua insurrection in 1932 was decisive, and his importance during the crisis was almost exclusively linked to his person. But Svinhufvud was sufficiently detached from the democratic front and even from his own party, the National

Coalition, that he showed no inclination or capability to "lead his own party and its allies." He did not share the pro-Lapua positions of the National Coalition in those years and at the same time was wholly extraneous to the political evolution of the other parties of the "White" front, which after 1932 were orienting themselves more and more towards a stable alliance with the Social Democrats. Thus, the democratic front was sufficiently cohesive, but found itself in a losing position when Svinhufvud saved the regime by stopping the Mäntsäla insurrection and created the conditions for the disbandment of Lapua. The democratic front became stronger and ultimately achieved consolidation in later years without, and largely against, Svinhufvud. The president had lost most of his political influence at the end of his presidential mandate, when he was replaced by the Agrarian leader Kyösti Kallio. It is hard to find any charismatic figure to speak of in Belgium in the interwar years from the protagonists of the crisis on the democratic front. Hubert Pierlot was the decisive actor in keeping together a Catholic Party on the verge of disintegration, but although he was an able politician, he was not a charismatic leader. Similarly, King Leopold III, the key figure in solving dangerous deadlocks and avoiding political vacuum during the pivotal moments of the crisis, certainly did not have the immense prestige that his father, Albert I, had enjoyed during his reign. The prime minister that faced Rex during the worst part of the crisis, Paul van Zeeland, was not even, strictly speaking, a political leader, but rather a brilliant young technocrat with relatively scant experience in national politics at the highest level.

This prevalence of noncharismatic successful democratic leaders in the fight with extremism in troubled interwar democracies is probably not the result of chance. We have seen before that the decisive factor in defending democracy in those years was keeping the democratic front together, a process likely to require different characteristics than those typical of a charismatic leader. Patience, ability to compromise, capacity to build consensus—these are the necessary attributes in keeping within the same front allies holding divergent positions on many issues. The leader must painstakingly mediate among them: the main imperative is that of avoiding defection from the democratic front, and defections are normally driven by electoral, policy, or spoils reasons. At the limit, one could say that doing this requires scheming behind the scenes and constructing political alliances and projects, which are in their essence, although not in their goals, somewhat similar to those of the forces defecting from the majority, which made the Italian and German democracies more

vulnerable to extremist attacks. Be that as it may, the picture seems to be more nuanced than a simple contraposition of more or less charismatic leaders on the democratic front to more or less charismatic leaders on the antidemocratic front would suggest. In the more complex situation of interaction between democracy and extremism today, the need to keep the moderate forces together and to exclude the extremists at all costs from access to governmental power seems to be less straightforward. Yet it seems that the new extremist parties, especially those at the right end of the political spectrum, are characterized by the presence of leaders—Le Pen, Haider, Schönhuber, Bossi, Gilstrup, Blocher, Janmaat, Fortuyn, and so on—who, if not necessarily "charismatic," have certainly been forceful and more visible than their respective parties, which in many case are their creatures. Thus, some aspects of the contraposition of all-promising ideologies supported by flamboyant leaders to rather ordinary, unexciting, workaday older politicians that often do not have a simplifying, all-embracing formula to oppose to the extreme right, which characterized the clashes between democracy and antidemocracy in the 1920s and 1930s in many European countries, may be still recognizable today—although obviously on a much smaller scale and with less epochal tones.

In conclusion, the "successful" democratic heroes to oppose to the "failed" ones of Weimar and pre-Fascist Italy, who in the turbulent interwar years have put into practice Linz's plea for "statesmanship, flexibility and timing" (Linz 1978a, 50) necessary to save democracy, need not be the "exceptional people" that Tucker mentions in the epigraph opening this chapter. At times, less enthusing—and probably for this reason perhaps less acknowledged—politicians can help the cause of democracy better than flamboyant leaders. Democracy and populism are served by different skills.

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Party Names and Translations

Table A.1 Party Names and Translations

Name in Original Language	Acronym	English Name
	Czechoslovakia	
Republikánská strana zemědělského a malorolnického lidu	RSZML	Republican Party of Agrarian and Peasants (Czech Agrarians)
Národná republikánská strana rol'nická	NRSR	Slovak Agrarians
Československá živnovstensko-obchodnická strana středostavovská	ČŽOSS	Czechoslovakian Trade and Industry Middle-Class Party
Československá narodně socialistická strana	ČNSS	Czechoslovak National Socialist Party
Československá sociálně-democratická strana dělnická	ČSDSD	Czechoslovak Social Democratic Party of the Workers
Československá strana lidová	ČSL	Czech(oslovak) People's Party
Hlinkova Slovenská L'udová Strana a združenie katholických rolníkov, domkárov, robotnikov a zamestnancov kresť ansko-sociálnýck	HSL'S	Hlinka's Slovak People's Party and Association of Catholic Peasants, Farmers, Workers, and Christian-Social Salaried Employees. (Slovak People's Party–Hlinka's Party)*
Československá národní demokracie	ČND	Czechoslovak National Democracy
Komunistická Strana Českonslovenska	KSČ	Communist Party of Czechoslovakia
Narodní obec fašistická	NOF	National Fascist Community (Czech Fascists)
Národní sjednocení	NU	National Union
Bund der Landwirte	BdL	Farmers' Federation (German Agrarians)
Deutsche Christlichsoziale Volkspartei	DCVP	German Christian Social Party
Deutsche Sozialdemokratische Arbeiterpartei in der Tschecho-slowakischen Republik	DSAP	German Social Democratic Party

Table A.1 Continued

Name in Original Language	Acronym	English Name
	Czechoslovakia	
Sudetendeutsche Heimatsfront (Partei)	SHF (SdP)	Sudeten German Home Front (Party)
Deutsche Nationalpartei	DNP	German Nationalist Party
Deutsche Nationalsozialistsche Arbeiterpartei	DNSAP	German National Socialist Party of Labor
	Belgium	
Parti Catholique/Katholieke Partij	—	Catholic Party
Parti Libéral/Liberale Partij	—	Liberal Party
Parti Ouvrier Belge/Belgische Werkliedenpartij	POB/BWP	Socialist Party
Parti Communiste de Belgique/ Communistische Partij van België	PCB	Belgium Communist Party
Rex	—	Rex (Rexist Party)
Frontpartij (Het Vlaamsche Front)	—	Front Party (the Flemish Front)
Vlaams Nationaal Verbond	VNV	Flemish National League
	Finland	
Suomen Kommunistinen Puolue/ Suomen Sosialistenen Työväenpuolue	SKP/SSTP	Finnish Communist Party
Suomen Sosialidemokraattinen Puolue	SDP	Social Democratic Party
Tailonpoikainen Vaaliliitto [Various names]	—	Peasant's League (Agrarians)
Suomen Pienviljelijäin	SPP	Small Peasant's Party
Kansanpuolue II	PP	People's Party II
Suomen Kristillinen Liitto	SKL	Christian Union of Finland
Kansallinen Edistyspuolue	NPP	National Progress Party
Svenska Folkepartiet i Finland	Sw.PP	Swedish People's Party
Svenska Vänstern	SV	Swedish Left
Kansallinen Kokoomus	NC	National Coalition Party
Isänmaallinen Kansanliike	IKL	Patriotic People's Movement

* Until 1925 the party was called Krest'anská Slovenská L'udová Strana (Christian Slovak People's Party).

APPENDIX B

Government Coalitions and Alignments in Presidential Elections

Table B.1 Governmental Majorities in the First Czechoslovak Republic, 1920–1938

Duration	Cabinets (PM)	Parties	% Seats	Coalition Formula
May–Sept. 1920	Tusar II	AGR, ČNSS, ČSDSD*	49.1	"red-green"
Sept. 1920–Sept. 1921	Cerny I	Nonparty (maj. Petka: AGR, ČNSS, ČSDSD, ČND, ČSL)	(59.8)	Nonparty
Sept. 1921–Oct. 1922	Beneš	Semipolitical (maj. Petka: AGR, ČNSS, ČSDSD, ČND, ČSL)	59.8	"Petka"
Oct. 1922–Dec. 1925	Svehla I	AGR,* ČNSS, ČSDSD, ČND, ČSL[a]	55.5 (53 b/w March '23 and Oct. '24, then 54.1)	"Petka"
Dec. 1925–March 1926	Svehla II	AGR,* ČNSS, ČSDSD, ČND, ČSL, ČZOSS	53	"Petka"
March–Oct. 1926	Cerny II	Nonparty (floating majority, Masaryk's support)	—	Nonparty
Oct. 1926–Feb. 1929	Svehla III	AGR,* ČSL, ČZOSS, BdL, DCVP (since Jan. '27: HSL'S-since April '28: ČND)	42 (Jan. '27: 49.7) (Apr. '28: 54)	Czech-German (later Slovak) Center-right
Feb.–Dec. 1929	Urdzal I	AGR,* ČND, ČSL, ČZOSS, BdL, DCVP, HSL'S (until Oct. '29)	54 (Oct. '29: 47.3)	Czech-German-Slovak Center-right
Dec. 1929–Oct. 1932	Urdzal II	AGR,* ČND, ČZOSS, ČSL, ČNSS, ČSDSD, DSAP, BdL[b]	68.7	Czech-German "Right-Center-Left"
Oct. 1932–Feb. 1934	Malypetr I	AGR,* ČND, ČSL, ČNSS, ČSDSD, DSAP, BdL	64.6	Czech-German "Right-Center-Left"
Feb. 1934–June 1935	Malypetr II	AGR,* ČSL, ČNSS, ČSDSD, DSAP, BdL	59.6	Czech-German "Center-Left"

Table B.1 Continued

Duration	Cabinets (PM)	Parties	% Seats	Coalition Formula
June–Nov. 1935	Malypetr III	AGR,* ČSL, ČZOSS, ČNSS, ČSDSD, DSAP, BdL	55.4	Czech-German "Center-Left"
Nov. 1935–Feb. 1936	Hodža I	AGR,* ČSL, ČZOSS, ČNSS, ČSDSD, DSAP, BdL	55.4	Czech-German "Center-Left"
Feb.–July 1936	Hodža II	AGR,* ČSL, ČZOSS, ČNSS, ČSDSD, DSAP, BdL	55.4	Czech-German "Center-Left"
July 1936–March 1938	Hodža III	AGR,* ČSL, ČZOSS, ČNSS, ČSDSD, DSAP, BdL, DCVP	57.4	Czech-German "Center-Left"
March–Sept. 1938	Hodža IV	AGR,* ČSL, ČZOSS, ČNSS, ČSDSD, ČND	55.7	"Petka"

* Party of the Prime Minister.

[a] Split of the HSL'S.

[b] Including the four MPs of the Deutsche Arbeits- und Wirtschaftsgemeinschaft (DAWG), who joined the BdL in parliament.

Table B.2 Partisan Alignments in Presidential Elections in the First Czechoslovak Republic, 1920–1935

Date	Candidate	Votes	Prevailing Party Alignments	Notes
May 27, 1920	**Masaryk**	**284**	Czech and Slovak parties	
	Naegel	61	German bourgeois parties	
	Others	6	Left wing of Czechoslovak Social Democrats	Two Communist candidates get 4 (Alois Muna) and 2 votes, respectively.
	Empty	72	German Social Democrats, Magyar parties (also absentees)	
	Vote total	423		
May 27, 1927	**Masaryk**	**274**	Petka parties and German "activists"	Except some ČSL and ČND representatives, who vote blank. The Czech and German Social Democrats vote for Masaryk despite opposition to the government.
	Sturc	54	Communist Party	
	Empty	108	German negativists, Magyar parties, Slovak autonomist (HSL'S)	The HSL'S abstains despite inclusion in government majority.
	Vote total	434		
May 24, 1934	**Masaryk**	**327**	Petka parties and German activists	Some ČND representatives abstain, some do not participate in vote.
	Gottwald	38	Communist Party	
	Empty	53	Slovak populist, Czech Fascists, German "negativist," Hungarian parties, some ČND (also absentees)	
	Vote total	418		
Dec. 18, 1935	**Beneš**	**340**	Czech SD and NS, Czech People's Party, German SD and DCVP, Communists, Slovak wing of the Agrarians	
	Nemec	24	Right wing of Czech Agrarians, National Democrats, Czech Small Traders, Fascists, German Agrarians	
	Empty	76	Sudetendeutsche Partei	
	Vote total	440		The alignments change in the last minute.

Note: The names of the elected candidates are reported in bold.

Table B.3 Governmental Majorities in Belgium, 1919–1940

Duration	Cabinets (PM)	Parties	Seats (%)	Coalition Formula
Nov. 1918–Nov. 1920	Delacroix	Catholic Party*/ Liberals/POB	95.2	Grand Coalition
Nov. 1920–Dec. 1921	de Wiart	Catholic Party*/ Liberals/POB	95.2	Grand Coalition
Dec. 1921–March 1924	Theunis I	Catholic Party*/Liberals	58.6	Center-right
March 1924–May 1925	Theunis II	Catholic Party*/Liberals	58.6	Center-right
May–June 1925	van de Vyvere	Catholic Party*	40.1	Single-party Catholic
June 1925–May 1926	Poullet	Catholic Party*/POB	81.8	Center-Left
May 1926–Nov. 1927	Jaspar I	Catholic Party*/ Liberals/POB	94.1	Grand Coalition
Nov. 1927–Dec. 1929	Jaspar II	Catholic Party*/Liberals	52.4	Center-right
Dec. 1929–June 1931	Jaspar III	Catholic Party*/Liberals	52.9	Center-right
June 1931–May 1932	Renkin I	Catholic Party*/Liberals	52.9	Center-right
May–Oct. 1932	Renkin II	Catholic Party*/Liberals	52.9	Center-right
Oct.–Dec. 1932	de Broqueville I	Catholic Party*/Liberals	52.9	Center-right
Dec. 1932–June 1934	de Broqueville II	Catholic Party*/Liberals	55.1	Center-right
June–Nov. 1934	de Broqueville III	Catholic Party*/Liberals	55.1	Center-right
Nov. 1934–March 1935	Theunis III	Catholic Party*/Liberals	55.1	Center-right
March 1935–June 1936	Van Zeeland I	Catholic Party*/ Liberals/POB	72.2	Grand Coalition
June 1936–Nov. 1937	Van Zeeland II	Catholic Party*/ Liberals/POB	76.2	Grand Coalition
Nov. 1937–May 1938	Janson	Catholic Party/ Liberals*/POB	76.2	Grand Coalition
May 1938–Feb. 1939	Spaak	Catholic Party/Liberals/ POB*	76.2	Grand Coalition
Feb.–April 1939	Pierlot I	Catholic Party*/POB	64.9	Center-left
April 1939–Jan. 1940	Pierlot II	Catholic Party*/Liberals	52.5	Center-right
Jan. 1940–Feb. 1945	Pierlott III	—	—	War cabinet

* Party of the Prime Minister.

Table B.4 Governmental Majorities in Finland, 1919–1939

Duration	Cabinets (PM)	Parties	Seats (%)	Coalition Formula
April–Aug. 1919	Castrén	NPP,* Agr, SwPP	45	"White" minority
Aug. 1919–March 1920	Vennola	NPP,* Agr.	34	"White" minority
March 1920–April 1921	Erich	NPP, Agr., SwPP, NC*	59	"White"
April 1921–June 1922	Vennola II	NPP,* Agr.	34	"White" minority
June–Nov. 1922	Cajander	Nonparty experts	—	"White"
Nov. 1922–Jan. 1924	Kallio	NPP, Agr.,* NC	47.5	"White" minority
Jan.–May 1924	Cajander II	Nonparty experts	—	"White"
May 1924–March 1925	Ingman	NPP, Agr., SwPP, NC*	61	"White"
March–Dec. 1925	Tulenheimo	NPP, Agr., NC*	49.5	"White" minority
Dec. 1925–Dec. 1926	Kallio II	Agr.,* NC	41	"White" minority
Dec. 1926–Dec. 1927	Tanner	SDP*	30	Left minority
Dec. 1927–Dec. 1928	Sunila	Agr.*	26	"White" minority
Dec. 1928–Aug. 1929	Mantere	NPP, NC*	22	"White" minority
Aug. 1929–July 1930	Kallio III	NPP, Agr.*	33.5	"White" minority
July 1930–Feb. 1931	Svinhufvud	NPP, Agr., SwPP, NC*	59	"White"
March 1931–Dec. 1932	Sunila II	NPP, Agr.,* SwPP, NC	66	"White"
Dec. 1932–Oct. 1936	Kivimäki	NPP,* Agr., SwPP, NC	66	"White"
Oct. 1936–Feb. 1937	Kallio IV	NPP, Agr.,* NC	40	"White" minority
March 1937–Dec. 1939	Cajander III	SDP, NPP,* Agr.	71.5	Center-left
Dec. 1939–March 1940	Ryti	SDP, NPP,* Agr., SwPP	82.5	Center-left

* Party of the Prime Minister

Table B.5 Partisan alignments in Presidential Elections in Finland, 1919–1937

	Election of the Electoral College			Result			
Date	Party	Declared candidate	Seats	Round	Final Candidates	Votes	Prevailng party alignments
July 25, 1919	National Coalition (NC)	President elected directly	28	—	**Ståhlberg**	143	NPP, SDP, Agr.
	Progressives (NPP)	by Eduskunta	26				
	Christian Workers' Party		2				
	Agrarians		42				
	Swedish People's Party (Sw.PP)		22				
	Social Democrats (SDP)		80		Mannerheim	50	NC, Sw.PP
Feb. 15, 1925	NC	Svinhufvud/ Suolahti	67	3rd	**Relander**	172	NC, Agr., Sw.PP
	NPP	Ryti	33				
	Agr.	Kallio/ Relander	69				
	Sw.PP	Söderholm	36				
	SDP	Tanner	79		Ryti	109	NPP, SDP
	Communists	Väisänen	16		Väisänen	16 (invalid)	Communists

Feb. 15, 1931	NC	Svinhufvud	64	3rd	**Svinhufvud**	151	NC, Agr., 18 Sw.PP
	NPP	Ståhlberg	50				
	SPP	Ståhlberg	2				
	Agr.	Kallio	69				
	Sw.PP	No candidate	25				
	SDP	Tanner	90		Ståhlberg	149	NPP, SDP, SPP, 7 Sw.PP
Feb. 15, 1937	IKL	Svinhufvud	17	2nd	Svinhufvud	104	NC, IKL, a maj. of Sw.PP
	NC	Svinhufvud	69		Ståhlberg	19	Part of NPP
	NPP/SPP/PP	Ståhlberg	36				
	Agr.	Kallio	56				
	Sw.PP	No candidate	25				
	SV	Ståhlberg	2				
	SDP	Tanner	95		**Kallio**	177	Agr., SDP, a min. of Sw.PP, part of NPP

Note: The names of the elected candidates are reported in bold.

APPENDIX C

Anti-extremist Legislation in Czechoslovakia, Finland, and Belgium

This appendix gives the exact references and a brief summary of the contents of the special anti-extremist legislation passed in Czechoslovakia, Finland, and Belgium during the interwar years. Particular attention is given to legislation passed in Czechoslovakia and Finland with only a summary description of Belgian legislation, as it was less important and developed than in the other two countries.[1]

CZECHOSLOVAKIA[2]

Law on extraordinary measures of 14 April 1920, n. 300 (SdGuV 1920, 796–98). This law stated that if the integrity of the state, its republican form, the public peace and order, the constitution, or the government were endangered, the government, with the approval of the President of the Republic (article 3) and the obligation to submit the decrees to the National Assembly within 14 days (article 15) could take extraordinary measures to suspend or temporarily restrict personal freedom, the freedom of habitation, the freedom of correspondence (article 1), as well as to impose restrictions on the freedoms of association, reunion, and the press (articles 8, 9, and 10). The governmental decree of 12 December 1920 n. 636 enacted such measures in several areas of the Sudeten regions (these would be withdrawn in January 1921—see SdGuV 1921, 8). The *law of 10 July 1933, n. 125* (SdGuV 1933, 662–63) amended this law by modifying the expression "republican form" into "republican-democratic form." This change was linked to the facts that the danger of an Habsburg restoration, which had arisen briefly in the early years of the Republic (Lemberg 1967), was now over and that the republic had to confront new challenges, formally republican but opposed to democracy. The law of 1933 tightened some of the provisions of the 1920 law.

Law on jury trials of 15 April 1920, n. 268 (SdGuV 1920, 694). This law enabled the government (after consultation with the High Court) to suspend the use of juries in trials when events occur that justify concerns about the jury's impartiality (article 1). This provision could be restricted to specific areas of the country and to specific crimes. It was applied in Sudeten areas in late 1920.

Law for the Protection of the Republic of 19 March 1923, n. 50 (SdGuV 1923, 239–52). This law was the first general and encompassing legislative act that provided for the defense of the democratic state from extremist attacks in several areas. The law was passed after the murder of the Conservative Finance Minister Alois Rasin; in its first

three articles were listed all the circumstances of threat to the republic, the state, and the constitution, which determine its application. Article 17 prohibited the establishment of, or participation in, any secret society aiming to undermine the constitutional form of the state. Article 13 forbade the formation of armed groups and their training in the use of arms. The same article prohibited the procurement, stockpiling, or transfer to any person firearms of any kind without official permission, and put every citizen under an obligation to report hidden arms to the authorities. Articles 7 and 8 explicitly protected the President of the Republic and the members of the government and of legislative bodies from attempts against their life and from bodily harm, respectively.

The law also contained several provisions devoted to placing limitations on political propaganda, a prelude to the increasingly strict limitations on the freedom of the press that would be introduced in the following years. Article 11 stated that the personal honor of the President of the Republic could not be made the object of defamatory criticism. Article 14 protected the democratic opinion of loyal citizens and made it a punishable offense to incite violence and/or hatred or other hostile acts in public against specific groups of the population because of their nationality, language, race, religion, or nonadherence to a religious creed. (This provision was due to the circumstance that extremist propaganda often targeted not only individuals but also groups: Jews, Marxists, Freemasons, bankers, and so on.) Article 18 prohibited the spreading of false news where the perpetrator was aware that in doing so he was causing anxiety or apprehension in a section of the population, or if by such rumors, he damaged the safety of the state or caused public disorder. Article 16 forbade the public endorsement of any criminal act, including politically motivated ones (to avoid the glorification of members of extremist groups who violated the criminal law). The law also included provisions intended to punish incitement to disaffection among the armed forces, as well as disloyalty of public officials: article 25 provided for the disciplinary prosecution of any public official who, in the exercise of his functions, endangered the interests of the public administration by violating the laws. Article 17 obliged public officials to denounce subversive activities that come to their knowledge. Even ordinary citizens were obliged to pass on information to the public powers where they had knowledge of subversive activities (article 12). Article 26 declared illegal the erection of monuments or other signs of public honor that were directly or indirectly against the state: glorification of members of the Habsburg family was explicitly prohibited. Articles 34 and 34a empowered the government to suspend the publication and circulation of subversive periodicals and newspapers for defined periods (defined in the government decree of 18 July 1933 n. 150, SdGuV 1933, 737), where an offense prohibited by the law was committed through the press.[3]

Law on the "State Court" of 19 March 1923, n. 51 (SdGuV, 254–64). This law created a special court (the "State Court") to administer the trials subsequent to the violation of the Law for the Protection of the Republic.[4]

Law on the Protection of Honor of 28 June 1933, n. 108 (SdGuV 1933, 584–99). Article 5 of this law extended the protection from libelous attacks that article 11 of the Law for the Protection of the Republic granted to the President of the Republic to several other

institutions: the Parliament (including either of its Houses, their Presidents, and their Committees), the government, the courts, and the bureaucracy, as well as the military and police corps.[5] The law also protected the honor of deceased persons, and that of periodical publications. Political parties enjoyed the same kind of protection, although only in cases in which the defamatory attack was carried out in the press or before a large audience. In granting protection to the honor of so many—but actually wanting to avoid libelous attacks against public figures—the law even forbade making reference to any previous judicial ruling against the person under attack (article 4).

Law reforming the electoral code for local elections of 12 July 1933, n. 122 (SdGuV 1933, 635–41). This law rendered necessary a confirmation by the Ministry of Internal Affairs for the elected mayors and their deputies, before they could exert their functions.[6]

Law amending and completing the Press Law of 10 July 1933, n. 126 (SdGuV 1933, 663–70). Article 2 of this law prohibited the circulation of newspapers directed against the unity, independence, and territorial integrity of the Czechoslovak Republic and its republican-democratic institutions. Publications endangering the public order by spreading false news could be prohibited too. Article 10 empowered the minister of internal affairs to prohibit circulation of foreign publications offending in the same way.

Law on antistate activities of public officials of 12 July 1933, n. 147 (SdGuV 1933, 723–28). This law was directed at all public officials whose actions were likely to affect "the sovereignty of the Republic, its independence, integrity, constitutional unity or the republican-democratic form" (article 2). The definition of "public official" used in this law was very broad, including all officials in state and local government service, teachers and professors in public schools and institutions, and all persons drawing salaries or pensions from the official budgets of the state, local authorities or public corporations, as well as ministers of churches, judges (article 16 of the law made an explicit exception to the constitutional principle of immovability of judges) and officers of the armed forces, whether in active service or retired (article 1). These subjects were affected by the law if they participated in any association pursuing subversive aims, whether openly or secretly; if they showed attitudes adversely affecting the dignity incumbent on public organs; if they were liable for propagating untrue facts, or facts which were apt to undermine public confidence in the legal institutions or in the safety of the currency. The penalties for these activities could be dismissal from service without pension, withdrawal of family subsidies for those members of the public official's family who carried out subversive activities, or forfeiture of pensions and discontinuation of military and other allowances. These penalties could not be administered by the government directly, but only after a trial (under full due process of law) in front of the Disciplinary Tribunals. The law was temporary, and was to last for the period in which the special need for the "protection of the state" would continue.

Law concerning suspension of activities and dissolution of political parties of 25 October 1933, n. 201 (SdGuV 1933, 845–50). In order to limit extremist activities in the public arena, this very important statute adopted a very broad definition of "party," including all sorts of groups, associations, and movements (Hartmann 1933; Adler 1934; Sander

1935). The reason for this was that subversive parties in other countries had been able to disguise themselves as sport or recreational associations of various kinds and carry out their activities in these organizational forms after being banned as a political party in the strict sense. On the basis of this new law, a "party" (so defined) could be suspended or dissolved by the government if, by its activities, "the independence, the constitutional unity, the integrity, the democratic-republican form, or the security" of the Czechoslovak Republic was gravely endangered (article 1). The judgment whether a political group was illegal rested on the discretion of the government; since no specific ideology was mentioned, and the "objects" protected by the law covered quite a broad range, such discretion was quite broad.[7]

The statute also entailed "post-prohibition" measures: it aimed to prevent "all attempts to reconstitute the dissolved party under another name or in another form" (article 1). The main criterion for determining whether the dissolved party continued in disguise was the participation of the leading figures of the old organization in the activities of the new. The ban contained in the law also affected affiliated organizations, such as economic enterprises or recreational or cultural associations directly or indirectly promoting the aims of the unlawful organization.[8]

The law was very strict on individuals who participated in a party that had formerly been declared illegal. After suspension or dissolution, it was unlawful for the party as such and for its former members to carry out any activities by which the unlawful purposes might be pursued. This was directed against individual activities per se, even if no attempt at reconstitution was proved. Especially prohibited were wearing uniforms or exhibiting symbols or emblems that indicated allegiance with the banned organization, as well as organizing or participating in meeting and assemblies, even private ones. Also prohibited was the canvassing of supporters, the solicitation or collection of funds, and any form of support for or active sympathy with the banned organization (article 2). It was unlawful to issue press statements or printed matter of any kind (articles 5 and 6). Former members of outlawed organizations could be subjected to strong restrictions on their personal freedom: denial of the secrecy of correspondence and communications, expulsion from certain localities, or confinement in certain localities for definite periods, surveillance by police. All these measures could be taken for as long as it was deemed necessary by the administrative authorities (article 7).

The law also gave a broad definition of "membership": members were not only those enrolled in the registers of the party but also those who had belonged or sympathized with the party during the six months prior to the decree of dissolution. A "sympathizer" was a person who actively supported the party, had supported or approved publicly of its unlawful aims during the preceding six months, had been a candidate for the party, or had been proposed by it for any public function. In the case of the dissolution of the party—not so in case of suspension—its MPs would lose their parliamentary seats (technically, they would be considered as having resigned). The same applied to the other members of the party holding seats in other representative bodies. The vacancies in the national Parliament would not be filled until the following

election.[9] When elections were held, the name of the dissolved party could not be used. Its former members or representatives could not hold any political office, whether by election or appointment, for a period of three years following the dissolution or suspension order. Originally intended to last until 1 January 1935, the law was renewed three times until 1 January 1938.[10]

Law amending the Law for the Protection of the Republic and the Press Law of 10 July 1934, n. 140 (SdGuV 1934, 485–89). This law introduced the protection of citizen who supported democracy, by making unlawful the incitement against individuals or groups because of their adherence to the republican-democratic form and organization of the state. Moreover, this law extended the period during which the publication and circulation of subversive newspapers could be prohibited.[11]

Law for the Defense of the State of 13 May 1936, n. 131 (SdGuV 1936, 461–543). This law is probably one of the strictest and the most elaborate piece of anti-extremist legislation ever passed in a democracy: its 9 chapters, 82 pages, and 201 articles concentrate power in the hands of the government so as to enable it to react effectively in case of an emergency situation caused either by war or by internal events within the state or on its borders that endangered, to a high degree, the integrity of the state, the republican-democratic form of state, the constitution, or public peace and order. Another circumstance in which the law could be invoked was if the need arose for the government to respect the obligation deriving from an international treaty. In each of these circumstances, according to this law the "state of military preparedness in case of war" could be invoked. This meant the introduction of martial law and other exceptional measures. In effect, nearly all the "border districts" (officially defined in a separate decree)within a distance of 25 kilometers from the border were militarized.[12] Politically unreliable people could be expelled from those areas, and foreigners could be forbidden to enter factories located in the border districts whose products could be even remotely related to the exigencies of war. Violations of this law were to be judged under due process of law, but the trials were not to be public and the accused would be compelled to choose their lawyer from an official list—from which, of course, all lawyers that could be suspected to be in any way connected to the SdP had been excluded. The police stations in these areas were reinforced almost exclusively with Czech personnel.

The only arbiter of whether the conditions for the enactment of the law were fulfilled was the government itself. In this case, the government constituted itself in a "Supreme Defense Council," equipped with almost unchallengeable powers for controlling the entire life of the country. This organ had legislative powers (article 13). Moreover, when the law was enacted, all state organs could deviate from normal procedures and adopt exceptional ones when they deemed it necessary. This law de facto foresaw a situation in which the 1920 constitution was suspended, and the government was endowed with dictatorial powers.[13]

Law on political symbols of 21 October 1936, n. 269 (SdGuV 1936, 1160-69). The last piece of anti-extremist legislation that the Czechoslovak state adopted before the end of the First Republic was this law on the use of flags and political symbols, one of the most

elaborate legislative acts of this kind ever passed. This law aimed to render antistate and antinational symbolism impossible on Czechoslovak territory. The law imposed penalties for wearing or showing in public any emblem indicating a political opinion hostile to the origin, independence, and integrity of the Czechoslovak Republic. More specifically, it prohibited the use of uniforms or any other political symbols—including special greetings—that permitted recognition of the affiliation of individuals or groups with a party that had been suspended or banned on the basis of the party ban law of 1933.

FINLAND

Law on associations of 10 January 1930, n. 4 (FF 1930, 5–6). This law, by modifying an old law of 1919 on associations, enabled the minister of the interior, the prefects and the office of the public prosecutor to ban the activities of any association on the basis of the following criteria. First, whether the association was carrying out an immoral or illegal activity; second, whether its activities were contrary to the goals defined in the association's statutes; finally, whether its activities had the clear goal of continuing those of an association that had already been dissolved, thereby eluding the 1919 law. Judicial review of the ban was compulsory within two weeks of the notification of the ban itself. The tribunal could then formally dissolve the association. This law was amended in 1933 (law n. 229) and 1934 (law n. 231).

Law on the freedom of the press of 31 July 1930, n. 272 (FF 1930, 915-16). This law amended a previous law of 4 January 1919 (law n. 1) by enlarging the scope of the reasons that a publication could be confiscated by the judicial authorities and giving the Ministry of Justice the power to suspend indefinitely any publication if he judged that it was violating the Criminal Code. The minister had to report to the judicial authorities within a defined period; if the judge did not annul the ordinance, it would remain in force during the whole trial through all degrees of jurisdiction. The same applied to any publication replacing the suspended one. Penal sanctions were inflicted on those who infringed this law.

Law on political propaganda of 31 July 1930, n. 273 (FF 1930, 917). This law amended chapter 16, article 24 of the Criminal Code, inserting a new provision that prohibited false rumors apt to disparage the reputation of the government, the parliament, or the public authorities.

Law on the State of War of 26 September 1930, n. 303 (FF 1930, 967-75). This law endowed the President of the Republic with special powers in case of war. The point of interest here is that the situation of internal revolt was formally equated with that of external attack. Article 1 of the law stated that the President should have the same powers in both circumstances, to ensure either the defense of the state or the maintenance of legal order. The President could also restrict the "state of war," that is, the conditions for the application of the law, to only one part of the country. The same parallelism between the "external defense" and "safeguarding the legal order" is sustained throughout the whole text of the law. Chapter 2 of the law, entitled "Measures

apt to the maintenance of public order," contained the most important provisions relating to "internal" defense. Articles 5 through 7 authorized restrictions on the personal freedom of those who incited to revolt or sedition—these included arrest, personal and home searches, controls on communication. The arrest could be prolonged for the whole period of application of the "state of war" simply on the basis of a well-founded estimation that arrestee's release might be harmful for the defense of the country or for public security, without any other legal justification (article 6). The Council of Ministries could decide by decree to limit or suspend altogether, for the whole period of application of the law, the activity of all groups and associations detrimental to the maintenance of public order or to the defense of the country (article 8). Article 46 established penal sanctions for those who did not observe the limitations to the freedom of association.

Law on the Protection of the Republic of 18 November 1930, n. 336 (FF 1930, 1045). Article 1 of this law stated that if public order and security were threatened, the President of the Republic could take by decree all necessary measures to avoid the danger or restore order. The President was not to be limited in his actions towards this purpose by the Constitution of 1919, in particular by what was established in its article 6 (protection of personal freedom), article 7 (freedom of domicile and circulation), article 10 (freedom of press and meeting), article 11 (inviolability of the domicile), and article 12 (inviolability of correspondence). On the basis of this law, therefore, the President could basically violate the constitution by decree in order to take "all necessary measures"—being at the same time the sole judge of this "necessity." The President's power was only limited by the obligation to submit "without delay" his decrees to the Eduskunta, which could abolish them (article 2). This law would remain in force until 31 December 1935.

Law modifying the Organic Law on the Chamber of Deputies of 18 November 1930, n. 337 (FF 1930, 1046). This law declared ineligible to the Chamber those who take part in an association, group, or organization the activity of which intended to subvert by violent means the political regime and the social system of Finland, or which favored or supported, directly or indirectly, such activity. The law also punished those who, during the previous three years, had been active in favor of an organization of this kind, or had in any manner favored actions tending to the above-mentioned aim. While this law does not mention the Communist Party or the communist ideology, these were clearly hinted at in the preamble of the bill, which spoke of "persons submitted to foreign influence," whose action "has already provoked among the citizens a justified reaction."

Law modifying the electoral law, of 18 November 1930, n. 338 (FF 1930, 1047). This law prohibited the presentation of an electoral list including a person not eligible on the basis of the modification of the Organic Law of the Chamber of Deputies just mentioned. The local electoral committees—administrative bodies that received lists of electoral candidates from "associations of electors"—were declared competent to check the lists to this purpose and reject them if necessary. Their decisions could be appealed

before the Supreme Administrative Court. This law was meant not only to exclude the Communists from electoral competition by establishing checks in the very early stage of the presentation of candidacies, but also to "legalize" retroactively "anti-Communist supervision" of the electoral lists already carried out by the Lapuans in the elections of 1930.

Law on high treason of 23 January 1931, n. 14 (FF 1931, 92). Sharper penal sanctions were established in this law—technically an amendment to the Criminal Code—for those who knowingly joined or supported any association or group whose aim was to subvert the political and social system of Finland. The provisions of this law applied to those who took part in any meeting having to do with encouraging such activity, or even debating its encouragement, as well as to those who praised or diffused praise, in words or in writing, for the act of high treason or preparation for it. The preamble to the bill for this law stated that the law was meant to counteract Communist activities and propaganda.

The law on the "protection of peace in the workplace" of 6 February 1931, n. 62 (FF 1931, 155–56). The preamble to the bill for this law also stated that the law was directed against the Communists and their influence among workers. The explicit goal of the law was to avoid the disturbance of the "peace of workers at their workplace" by "persecution" and discrimination caused by members of the Communist Party and its affiliated organizations. These, in fact, were accused of having persecuted non-Communist workers, and especially those who had fought in the civil war on the White side or belonged to the Civil Guard by forcing them to leave their workplace if they refused to enroll in communist associations, or alternatively to pay a fee to them. Article 2 is explicit about the objectives of this law, clarifying that if the actions mentioned in the law were to be undertaken against a person because he "participated in an action aiming to defend the country, or to safeguard the social and legal order," prison sanctions would be inflicted on the perpetrators. More specifically, this law punished anyone who attempted with violence or menace or other means to prevent people from working or hiring workers, or to force a worker to participate in a strike, or to keep him from searching for a job, or to compel an employer not to hire a worker. Similarly, all attempts to force an employer or a worker to pay a sum of money in order to "compensate" for work done during a period of strike or in a boycotted work site, as well as to join or leave any association or group were also outlawed. Defamation against the same subjects was also prohibited by this law. All these infringements of the law were to be pursued *ex officio* by the public prosecutor.

The last piece of legislation, passed explicitly against the IKL, whose members and even MPs wore uniforms, was the *"Blouse Law" of 5 April 1934, n. 132* (FF 1934, 329–30). This elaborate law forbade the wearing of any conspicuous article of clothing with the purpose of showing that the wearer belonged to any political group, association, or party. Such displays were particularly prohibited in public (meetings, places of leisure) and for public officials during the exercise of their functions or in public places. Article 3 of this law made it mandatory for every citizen to pass information on to the

competent authorities concerning any crime that came to his or her knowledge and to lend a hand to agents of the state in the exercise of their official duties. This law was originally to expire in 1936, but it was extended to the end of 1938.

BELGIUM

The *Law of 3 January 1933* (MB June 1933, 3191) concerned the production, commerce, and possession of weapons and munitions.

The *Law on treasonable acts of 17 July 1934* (MB 27 July 1934, 4115) dealt with crimes and attacks against the external security of the state.

The *Law of 27 July 1934* (MB 2 August 1934, 4196) punished anybody who, by gestures, words, or acts, attacked a member of the Chambers while exercising his legislative duties. Similarly protected were ministries, magistrates, and public officials.

The *Law of 28 July 1934* (MB 3 August 1934, 4197) punished the undermining of military discipline intended to provoke difficulties in recruiting.

The Law of 29 July 1934 (MB 6 August 1934, 4264) prohibited private militias. Unlike in other countries, the law was not directed against the mere use of uniforms, although as it happened the application of the law against military organizations led to the confiscation of uniforms. The law (art.1) expressly declared illegal all organizations the aim of which is to substitute the army or the police. This law not only prohibited the formation of private (or party) armies but also military training (art. 5), which, while not necessarily connected with the use of uniforms, may teach individuals the use of arms and force. This law raised the questions of exceptions, that is of exemption from the rigors of the law of certain nonpolitical associations, such as the Boy Scouts, also having military-like discipline and organization. The Crown (i.e., the government) could grant such exemptions. The same organizations could also be allowed to have training at specific times and places, still under authorization of the government.

The *Law of 4 May 1936* (MB of 6 May 1936, 3417), in its article 2 prohibited the wearing of arms at meetings and demonstrations, tightening the provision against the wearing of arms of the Law of January 1933 mentioned above.

The *Law of 5 May 1936 completing the Law of 29 July 1934* (MB of 6 May 1936, 3417—"Loi completant la loi du 29 Juillet 1934"). The ban already imposed on military groups was here extended to the public display of individuals or groups that might evoke the *impression* of military formations. Again, exceptions could be granted for sport or recreation.

The *Law of 12 March 1937* (MB of 14 March 1937, 1490) modified article 106 of the Electoral Code, prohibiting "frivolous" by-elections. After Degrelle forced the by-election of April 1937, the measure was passed to prevent similar actions in the future.

Notes

CHAPTER ONE: Democratic Stability and Democratic Crises

Epigraph: Juan J. Linz (1978a), 51.

1. The chapter of the volume in question that analyses the survival case of Finland reports on the political dynamics of the crisis of the early 1930s but frames the overall analysis in broad sociological terms (Alapuro and Allardt 1978).

2. A further, underlying criterion of selection is that of choosing cases with a common geographical location and broadly common historical experiences. This allows the parameterization of other contextual variables that could also influence the regime outcome, thereby increasing the plausibility of findings (e.g., Diesing 1972). Obviously, even remaining within interwar Europe, many other variables can be considered important in influencing the fate of democracy in the countries under analysis: I discuss the relationship between my analysis and alternative explanations in chapter 8.

3. The total number of European states in 1920 (considering the countries west of Russia and excluding small countries such as Iceland—also not entirely independent in this period—Andorra, Luxembourg, San Marino, Monaco, and Liechtenstein) was twenty-six. In Albania and Hungary, however, no minimally democratic elections were ever held in the period under analysis here (Ajnenkel 1983; Macartney 1962). Table 1.1 therefore does not include them, nor does it include Spain and Ireland, which, for very different reasons, do not fit the typology. In Spain, the increasingly harsh confrontation between the left and the right ended in a civil war and led to the end of democracy (e.g., Linz 1978b). Ireland, a case of democratic survival, was given semi-independent status in 1923 and became fully independent in 1937. The position of the country, in particular with respect to the United Kingdom, heavily influenced interwar politics and the logic of systemic support and challenge in completely idiosyncratic ways (e.g., Mair 1979).

4. As Linz has argued, political violence was important not so much in the takeover itself, but rather before it, in limiting the efficacy of the democratic government in keeping public order and thereby creating a power vacuum that made the "legal" takeover easier (Linz 1978a, 56).

5. It goes without saying that secessionist and antidemocratic parties constitute two completely different challenges for a democratic system, and should be considered separately. However, both share an interest in bringing the system down—albeit for very different reasons—and might constitute a political constraint on democratic forces trying to achieve the necessary coordination for a common defensive strategy.

6. Such as, for example, the average strength of antisystem parties over the whole period or subperiods, as used by Berg-Schlosser (1998).

7. Another characteristic that sets France apart from the other cases in the same cell is that the extreme right did not have a disciplined party with which to attack the system. On the extreme right during the French Third Republic, see Gooch (1927) and Milza (1987), as well as the classic volumes by Rémond (1967 and 1982). On the republic's institutional crisis of the 1930s, see Braunias (1936).

8. A few studies, for example those by Luebbert (1991), Karvonen (1993), and Berg-Schlosser and Mitchell (1999 and 2002) indeed analyze some or all of the survival cases analyzed here, but they do so in the context of a comparison of a dozen countries or more, and thus devote relatively small attention to the peculiarities of "outlier" cases. I discuss the assets and liabilities of different research designs in this kind of analysis in chapter 8.

9. Democratic survival can also be achieved by "spontaneous" depolarization, that is, by endogenous changes in the antisystem actors, which may undergo important changes in their ideology and possibly leadership—rather than only by the enactment of strategies of defense by the incumbents. However, the two processes leading to survival from a situation of high polarization can be clearly distinguished on the basis of the time that they require: in particular, "endogenous" depolarization normally develops over a longer span of time, while the present analysis covers the short-term developments of a crisis only.

10. If it is reasonable to argue that the potential impact of these choices decreases as a crisis comes to an end, even then it does not disappear altogether (e.g., Linz 1978a, 11).

11. In the words of two of its main proponents, the process-tracing procedure is specifically "intended to investigate and explain the decision process by which various initial conditions [in this case, the party system mechanics induced by polarization] are translated into outcomes [democratic breakdown or survival]. A process-tracing approach entails the abandonment of the strategy of 'black-boxing' the decision process: instead, this decision-making process is the center of the investigation" (George and McKeown 1985, 35).

12. This claim is to be interpreted against the background of nonfocused comparative case studies, criticized at length by George and McKeown: "The importance of introducing a selective theoretical focus into case studies will be evident if we recall that one reason so many case studies in the past contributed unevenly and meagerly to theory development is that they lacked a clearly defined and common focus. . . . However interesting and well done in and of itself, each case study tended to pursue rather idiosyncratic research problems. . . . Moreover, many of these case studies lacked a clear focus, because the investigator was not guided by a well-defined theoretical objective and was drawn instead in directions dictated by the most readily available historical material or by aspects of the case that were judged interesting on intuitive grounds" (1985, 42).

13. Like all methodological approaches, this one too presents its own problems. For example, given the historical nature of the analysis, the impossibility of reconstructing exhaustively the entire set of motivations and stimuli that the main actors attended to, or the effects of the institutional environment on such motivations and stimuli. These problems—normally addressed in process-tracing studies in organizational research, the natural setting for process-tracing analyses—as well as related methodological and

theoretical issues will be discussed in the concluding chapter, against the background of alternative theoretical and methodological approaches to democratic stability and democratic crises in interwar Europe.

14. On militant democracy, see Loewenstein (1937a and b) and van den Haag (1955). The literature on the "*streitbare Demokratie*" in the Federal Republic of Germany is very broad: for a theoretical-constitutional perspective, see, among others, Lameyer (1978 and 1981); for a more empirical analysis, see von Beyme (1984), Jesse (1985), and Jaschke (1991). The normative aspects are addressed, among others, in Hättich (1973), while Tomuschat (1992) and Fox and Nolte (1995) focus on the aspects related to international law. For comparative analyses of these problems, see Brunner (1965), Oberreuter (1978), Gordon (1987), Greenspan and Levitt (1993), van Donselaar (1995), and Canu (1996).

CHAPTER TWO: The Challenges

1. The concept can also be applied to nondemocratic regimes (Sartori 1982; see also, e.g., Saich 1990; Lewis 1997), but these are not relevant here.

2. For a complete *Begriffsgeschichte* of anti-systemness and related concepts and a detailed reconstruction of the term, see Capoccia (2002a).

3. "Furthermore, not all the anti-system parties are such in the same sense: The negation covers, or may cover, a wide span of different attitudes ranging from 'alienation' and total refusal to 'protest.' Now, clearly alienation and protest are different in kind, not merely in degree. . . . Yet the distinction cannot be easily applied on empirical grounds, because large electorates cover all these sentiments, or attitudes. Voters can be protesters, while the party activists can be alienated: Likewise, the party leadership can be ideologically motivated, whereas the rank and file may simply lack bread." This definition encompasses "all the refusal-to-protest parties" (Sartori 1976, 132–33).

4. Centrifugal forces are determined by the tripolar structure of competition typical of polarized systems as well: the stable occupation of the center by one or more parties of the system makes centripetal competition unrewarding. On the other hand, central parties capitalize on the fear of extremists, which helps them maintain their electoral strength.

5. On polarization as a state and as a process, see Sartori (1982, 304–5).

6. These characteristics do not necessarily require that the party oppose values that are fundamental in *all* democracies. For example, the Fourth Republic in France is included by Sartori in the category of polarized systems, but the characterization of the Gaullist *Rassémblement pour la France* (RPF), which certainly exerted centrifugal pushes in the party system, as a party opposing the fundamentals of any democracy can be challenged (e.g., Williams 1971,230–39). Rather, the party embodied a genuine politico-constitutional opposition to the assembly regime of the Fourth Republic. Indeed, in this case, with the creation of the Fifth Republic, we also have the evidence after the fact of the kind of regime that would have met the demands of the Gaullists during the earlier postwar years. In this case, then, although it was not opposed to democracy as such, the RPF can be considered as relationally antisystem in its rejection of the legitimacy of the regime in which it then operated. In fact, the true dimension of comparison is not given by the political objectives with which the party's ideology is incompatible but rather by the importance of such objectives for that particular regime

and therefore also for the other parties (see Capoccia 2002a for other examples). Recognizing this is very important to apply the concept of antisystem party (and the whole analysis of defense of democracy) to other contexts, a point that is more systematically addressed in chapter 8.

7. In historical cases of "successful" antisystem parties—for example, the NSDAP in Weimar Germany—the assessment of a party's "ideological anti-systemness" can be based exclusively on an *ex post* judgment. Integrating the *ex post* criterion with the *ex ante* one is necessary, however, to analyze unsuccessful historical cases, as well as contemporary cases, of "ideologically" antisystem parties (and to avoid logical inconsistencies: the NSDAP was antisystem also *before* it became successful in its quest for power).

8. For alternative "minimal definitions" of democracy, see Sartori (1957, 120), Dahl (1982, 11; see also Dahl 1989), Di Palma (1990, 28), Huntington (1991, 9), Schmitter and Karl (1991), Schmitter (2000). For a systematic comparison of definitions and theories of democracy, see Schmidt (1997). The consequence of the adoption of different definitions of democracy for the applicability of the analysis of defense of democracy to other contexts is discussed in chapter 8.

9. Although both antidemocratic and secessionist parties both oppose some fundamental trait of a democratic regime, it goes without saying that the ideological content of the two positions is per se very different, and obviously no value judgment is implied here.

10. The Communist Party seceded from the Social Democrats in 1921, carrying with it only 7.8% of the MPs. This underrepresents its electoral influence—in fact the party reached a peak in the elections of 1925 of more than 13% of the seats, and then stabilized at 10% in the following two elections.

11. Moscow put pressure on the KSČ leaders to adopt a more revolutionary policy (organize and lead more strikes, push forward more "partial" economic requests and use these as first step for more general requests), to distribute propaganda attacking the Social Democratic Party, to organize the party in a cell structure, and so on. The Czechoslovak leaders tended instead to adopt "gradualist" and nonrevolutionary tactics (Shilling 1961). However, this "resistance" of the KSČ to the Comintern orthodoxy never implied a renunciation of the party's basic ideological commitments, even though the change in leadership (and in the leading class) of the KSČ "cost the party its mass character": the "new deal" within the party caused the dropout of around three-quarters of its membership (from around 100,000 to around 24,000), as well as a split in the Communist trade unions, one part of which joined the socialist union (Zinner 1963, 50).

12. The cooperation of the KSČ with the other parties on the left was also encouraged by the conclusion of the "mutual defense agreement" between Czechoslovakia and the U.S.S.R. in May 1935. Some signs of this cooperation were visible at the local level, where the Communists lowered their conditions for collaboration.

13. For a detailed analysis of the Czech Fascist movement, see Kelly (1995).

14. In 1929, the DNSAP formed squads of paramilitary auxiliaries, grouped in an organization called *Volkssportverband.* This was the most important organization of several of the same kind existing in the country (Zacek 1971). In the trial against members of these associations the courts were able to ban the DNSAP and the DNP (see chapter 4). Moreover, the parties had a large following in the German Universities

in Czechoslovakia (there were two in Prague). The German students living there, isolated both from the Czech population (by nationality) and from the Germans living in Prague (most of whom were of very high social status) developed a very extreme nationalist *Burschenschaftsideologie,* from which the German extremist parties drew support.

15. Several authors maintain that the Slovak People's Party (HSL'S) also displays characteristics which would allow its characterization as antisystem, since the party challenged the territorial integrity of Czechoslovakia and turned increasingly towards antidemocratic positions (Nolte 1966; Felak 1994). A close analysis of the party's ideological orientations and political goals yields a more nuanced picture, though. The main claim of the party was territorial autonomy for Slovakia, not secessionism. However, regional autonomy was hard for the Czech-based elites to accept, worried that the fragile structure of the new Czechoslovak democracy could collapse under centrifugal forces. Thus, three bills initiated between 1920 and 1938 on local government, the implementation of partial administrative reforms with the creation of provincial administrations, and three years of participation in the central government were not enough for the HSL'S to reach its main political goal. During the fourth legislature, the party leaned increasingly in the direction of secessionist and Fascist positions, as the quasi-Fascist/secessionist internal wing (linked to Hungarian irredentism), which had always existed in the party, increasingly gained power. Its leaders were Ferdinand Durcansky, Sano Mach, and Karol Murgas. Vojtech Tuka, the editor of the party's newspaper, was their main contact among the party leaders. The bimonthly publication of this faction, *Nastup,* had a clear separatist, anti-Marxist, anti-Semitic and anti-Czech position and showed clear admiration for Hitler and Mussolini (Hoensch 1965). This group also possessed a militia organized according to a Fascist model, the *Rodobrana* (Fatherland's Army), founded in 1923 and dissolved in 1927. However, despite this power shift inside the party in the mid-1930s, the leadership was always in the hands of the old leaders Hlinka (until his death in 1937) and his successor Tiso, who were both Catholic priests of traditionalist orientation but neither Fascist nor secessionist (Mamatey 1973; Lipscher 1979a).

16. After 1935 most Communist parties changed their attitude towards the Social Democratic and other democratic parties, following the new Comintern guidelines for fighting Fascism and Nazism (e.g., Wende 1981; East et al 1990).

17. Another antidemocratic group active in Flanders in the 1930s that also held authoritarian and irredentist ideas was the "*Verdinaso*" (abbreviation of "*Verbond der dietschen Nationaal Solidaristen*"), founded in 1931. Its leader, Joris van Severen, was an MP of the *Frontpartij* between 1921 and 1929. *Verdinaso* called for an authoritarian society and a corporatist system. In its first phase, like the VNV, its goal was to dissolve Belgium and create a larger "Dietsche" motherland, which would include the Netherlands and Flanders. After 1937, this ideal evolved from "Dietschland" to "Dietsche Rijk": a larger territorial entity including the Netherlands, all of Belgium, and Luxembourg. (Paradoxically, this new objective pushed the movement towards ardent Belgian nationalism.) The movement had a militia, with the uniform, symbols, and salutes typical of contemporary Fascist and Nazi squads active in other countries (Stengers 1965; see also Elias 1972).

18. In May 1919 Kuusinen went clandestinely from Russia to Finland, where he stayed for about a year, with the task of supervising the creation of the underground

organization of the party. In the winter of the same year he decided that the Finnish masses were not "ready for revolution," so he autonomously began changing the tactics of the party, organizing the participation of workers in public organization and public Communist propaganda with great effectiveness. This caused conflicts with the SKP center in Russia, which accused him of neglecting the underground organization and of being too independent in building up a public party, over which the SKP wanted strict control. The conflict between Kuusinen and the SKP headquarters in Russia, in different forms and displaying different levels of intensity, went on for several years (Matti 1966; Hodgson 1967; Upton 1973).

19. For example, the instruction given by the party to the first parliamentary group elected in the 1922 elections was as follows: "The party's executive board makes clear that the group is the spokesman for the class will of the revolutionary proletariat in the legislative mechanism of the class state. The group must always be conscious of the fact that the aims of the working class can be realized only when the machinery of oppression of the bourgeois state has been smashed and the absolute power of workers has been substituted in its place. Holding to this goal, the group will act unreservedly as the representative of the working class against all its enemies, working towards the destruction of the entire capitalist system. It is outside the range of the possibilities that in a society torn by class distinctions a parliamentary group chosen by the revolutionary proletariat could even temporarily consider itself as an organic part of the state machinery. Faithful to those principles which the revolutionary proletariat follows in its struggle in all lands, the group is a weapon to be used in the disruptive work of the proletariat in the capitalist system of oppression" (quoted in Rintala 1962b, 16). From this quotaton it is evident that not only was it the firm intention of the Communists to filibuster and in general act as a stumbling block in the Finnish parliament, the goals of these tactics were the establishment of proletarian dictatorship and the disruption of the bourgeois state. The Communists' political interventions in and outside parliament leave little doubt about their ultimate goals (e.g., Rintala 1962b, 16–17).

20. It emerges from documents held in the Finnish secret police archives that the SKP was heavily financed by Moscow: "The secret police seized, in the late 1920s, documents about the finances of the SKP during 1927. On the basis of these it has been possible to calculate that the party spent in that year much more than one million marks. Over the same period the Social Democratic Party spent 1.1 million Finnish marks and the National Coalition Party 800,000 Finnish marks" (Paastela 1991, 8).

21. One of the "programmatic" articles published in the Movement's newspaper *Aktivisti* reads: "Above all else we have demanded that . . . the law of God again be recognized in our courts as the established law, and in accordance with it order and peace return to our country" (quoted in Rintala 1962b, 165). According to Lapua, "justice" (for which read: the elimination of Communism) was an expression of the power of God, while statutes and laws were products of human action prone to error. In this context, Communists were to be eradicated from Finland because they were atheists and enemies of God.

22. In contrast to the Lapua Movement, the IKL was decidedly anticapitalist and anti-bourgeois. In a certain sense, the IKL felt itself to be closer to Communism since, although "destructive in nature," it at least promised reform, a defensible position since the system of parties had become rotten and powerless. In the new corporate state, the

"chaos of capitalism" would be replaced by an all-inclusive economic plan (Rintala 1962a, 226).

23. These areas did not have irredenta status: they never belonged to Finland. According to the IKL's official view, the significance of Greater Finland was that it marked the boundary between Western and Eastern civilizations. Hence, the creation of a real Finnish *kansakokoinasuus* would render Finland invincible and able both to conquer Greater Finland and to defend Western civilization from the "barbaric" East.

24. Five old conservative members of the (twenty-three-member) executive committee of the NC resigned, among them the chairman of the executive committee and the editor of the party's newspaper. These traditional party leaders were replaced by individuals who had been very close to the Lapua Movement and the IKL, including the latter's deputy president. At that stage, the takeover of the NC seemed quite complete.

CHAPTER THREE: The Defense

1. Reactions such as demonstrations, rallies, candlelight processions and the like have been frequent in recent years in several countries as manifestations of public opposition, typically to acts of violence perpetrated by extreme right-wing groups, and constitute an important part of the overall phenomenon of responses to extremism. They were comparably less important in the interwar years.

2. At least according to one of the several meanings of this term as used in the literature (Schmitter 1995). The concept of democratic consolidation constitutes an example of a term that has been so stretched that it is now difficult to understand what exactly it means. For a conceptual analysis of the term, see Schedler (1998).

3. Strictly speaking, this was not a formal decree, although it is portrayed as such in some of the literature: the minister-presidents simply reaffirmed that existing provisions should still be considered valid and applied more strictly (von Beyme 1984).

4. The word comes from the Latin *lustratio,* meaning "purification," and refers to the ritual liberation from ceremonial impurity (Boed 1999, 358).

5. Like all repressive provisions for political reasons, purge strategies lend themselves to criticism, the main thrust of which is that they risk "the miscarriage of justice by assigning collective guilt without a determination of an individual's responsibility for any harm caused" (Boed 1999, 359, and 385–402). This criticism applies in different measures to the various instances of lustration processes, which have been historically more or less sensitive to individual cases.

6. Lustration laws were passed, for example, in Czechoslovakia in 1991, in Bulgaria in 1992 (then abolished three years later), in Hungary in 1994, in Albania in 1995, and in Poland in 1997. They all affected different categories of political and bureaucratic officials of the previous regime and included mechanisms for ascertaining their responsibility, and sanctions, in the eternal attempt to balance principles with *Realpolitik,* although the mix was different in each instance (Krastev 1994, Bertschi 1994; Boed 1999). Of particular interest is the strategy adopted in Germany after the fall of the GDR and the reunification of 1990, which involved a mix of exclusion—"cleansing" of the GDR bureaucracy—and inclusion—retention of the old bureaucrats in their posts, coupled with specific training. *Stasi* (*Staatssicherheitsdienst,* the secret service) employees and all those who violated human rights or the rule of law—the system

featured individual screening, in which the politics of the individual bureaucrats did matter—were automatically excluded from office (Kvistad 1994, 69; Karstedt 1998). In the FRG administration, the ex-GDR bureaucrats who remained were appointed on probation for a temporary period, and had to pursue specific training in order to retain the post.

7. This does not mean that these measures are necessarily successful: as one scholar has put it, "trials are crucial for democracy's long-term health, but they are seldom attempted." The Argentinean case is paradigmatic in this respect: trials were staged but several military uprisings convinced the civil government to put an end to them. Later on, President Menem even pardoned the "junta" leaders who had already been convicted (Rosenberg 1995, 149).

8. The prosecution and conviction of the authors of past crimes seems to be more viable if international actors intervene in the process, see for example the recent creation of ad hoc tribunals for crimes in the former Yugoslavia and Rwanda (Walsh 1996; Goldstone 1996). The debate on these issues is vast and cannot be retraced here. As a student of these problems has put it, it is a way "to strengthen democracy in the long term without committing suicide in the short term" (Rosenberg 1995, 149).

9. Exceptionally, for example in South Africa, the truth commission can be actively—and not only indirectly—involved in the promotion of national reconciliation.

10. For example, Boli describes how the development of public schools in nineteenth-century Sweden had a central role in the quest for building an egalitarian society through the realization of modern citizenship and, consequently, participatory democracy (Boli 1989).

11. Some authors distinguish between activities enacted during the phase of liberalization of an autocratic regime, and activities in support of democracy enacted once the transition is completed. Schmitter and Brouwer consider four levels (targets) of intervention in support of democracy: single individuals, civil society, political society, and the state. At three of these levels (citizens, civil society, and the state) the supportive intervention of external actors is considered as most appropriate in the phase of consolidation. This is not a normative judgment, as Schmitter and Brouwer are quite attentive to the possible shortcomings of external interventions in support of democracy. They consider such interventions as more appropriate in the consolidation phase rather than in the phase of liberalization/democratization of a nondemocratic regime. Their judgment is reversed in the case of support to political society (political parties and associations).

12. In ethnically diverse societies, activities involving education and political training are aimed at facilitating interethnic coexistence (e.g., Weiner 1998).

13. As happens with most of these strategies—bound to be controversial, given their delicate political nature—democracy aid programs have been subjected to sharp criticism from different quarters for their "ideological" nature. Moreover, they present serious problems of effectiveness and implementation, which in some cases have defeated their initial aim. On this, and on the process of learning and change in international democracy assistance over the years, see Carothers (1999, especially 59–64 and 331–52), and Youngs (2001).

14. The expression "clear and present danger" is indeed from a famous criterion at the basis of some early decisions of the U.S. Supreme Court on anti-extremist legislation (Kimball 1920).

15. This is a formal criterion that can have direct political relevance, since rules of a different formal rank are more or less resistant to innovation and change: for example, amending constitutional articles often requires a supermajority, so it is politically more difficult (since it may require the support not only of the ruling majority but also of part of the opposition) than for example passing or amending statute laws, which can be done by simple majority, or—even more so—administrative regulations, which are normally in the hands of the executive. In the text, for the sake of simplicity, I use the term "legislation" to refer not only to statutory laws but to all norms of any formal rank.

16. Antipropaganda norms are present in many contemporary democracies as well and include, for example, specific provisions against racist propaganda, "hate speech," or justifications or denials of the Nazi holocaust and the like (Björgo and Witte 1993; McGoldrick and O'Donnell 1998).

17. After World War II, there are cases of preventive passing and early implementation of a system of legal protection of democracy, often based on the "lessons of the past": this happened most notably in West Germany, where an elaborate system of legal protection against extremism was built in the constitution-making process, anchored in the 1949 Basic Law, and implemented in the early 1950s. In 1952, the Federal Constitutional Court outlawed the neo-Nazi *Sozialistische Reichspartei,* which had achieved remarkable successes at the regional level (11% in Niedersachsen and 7.7% in Bremen in the first *Landtag* elections in those regions). The Federal Government also successfully petitioned the Court for the ban of the Communist Party (KPD). A case of preventive passing but nonimplementation of anti-extremist legislation is Italy after World War II, when the existing constitutional and statutory provisions prohibiting the reconstitution of a Fascist party were never fully implemented against the MSI (Italian Social Movement), despite its clear association with the heritage of the prewar National Fascist Party (e.g., Pace 1982).

18. Some have suggested that specific electoral systems have an inherent bias against antisystem parties. The oldest and most famous argument of this kind goes back to Hermens, who maintained, basing his argument mainly on the fall of Weimar, that the "first past the post" system typical of Anglo-Saxon democracies would help protect democracy from the fragmentation engendered by PR systems, which ultimately makes democratic systems ungovernable. There is no space to go into this argument here in detail, but Hermens's thesis does not hold up to comparative testing. More recently the Italian political scientist Fisichella, basing his argument mainly on the French Fifth Republic, has maintained that the double-ballot system can be used as a "weapon against anti-system parties" (Fisichella 1984). The system in question would underrepresent extremists since they are unlikely to attract voters from electors of other parties in the second ballot, and therefore would most probably lose to a larger coalition of prosystem forces. However, while it might be true empirically that ideological antisystem parties perform badly in terms of vote transferability (Sartori 1997), this is not true analytically, as the ideological nature and the political/electoral isolation of an extremist party are two different things, as shown in chapter 2. None of these systems was in force in the cases analyzed here, where different forms of PR were used.

19. The minimal underrepresentation of Rex and the IKL took place at a stage in which those parties had largely ceased to represent a serious threat for the democratic system.

CHAPTER FOUR: Czechoslovakia

Epigraph: Jan Havránek (1971), 55.

1. These regions had never belonged to the Reich or to the historical Austrian regions.

2. On the Czechoslovak census, see Capek (1933–1934).

3. Smaller minorities had parties as well. On average, more than fifteen parties obtained seats after each election, making governmental stability very difficult: the average duration of a cabinet between 1920 and 1938 was just eleven and a half months (Karvonen 1993, 93).

4. The small Czechoslovak Trade and Industry Middle-Class Party (*Československá živnostensko-obchodnická strana středostavovská,* or ČŽOSS, also called the "Small Traders Party") seceded from the National Democrats, because of the ČND's excessive catering to big industry and finance. The Small Traders were present in several government coalitions in 1926–29 and 1934–38.

5. All the main parties of the First Republic resorted largely to the practice of patronage and clientelism based on their tight control of various branches of the public sector (Hapala 1968; on the role of political parties in the republic more extensively, see the studies in Bosl 1979).

6. The strife within the Social Democrats during 1920 endangered the stability of the national government led by the moderate Social Democrat Vlastimil Tusar. The reaction of President Masaryk and the democratic establishment was to appoint a nonparty cabinet and then endeavor to favor the moderate wing of the Social Democrats in the internal party struggle with ad hoc legislative provisions supporting the latter's constituency (see Mabey 1956; Oschlies 1975 and 1979). The Communist threat reemerged in the 1930s, when they tried to exploit the crisis caused by the rise of the SHF for their own ends (Slapnicka 1970, 81). The Czechoslovak and the Sudeten German Socialist parties, however, constantly isolated the Communists (Felak 1990).

7. The HSL'S demand for Slovak autonomy clashed considerably with the centralist inclinations of the national establishment. The HSL'S initiated three bills between 1920 and 1938 and participated in the central government for almost three years (January 1927 to October 1929) and could still only very partially attain this goal. Additionally, in the second half of the 1930s, the representatives of the party's internal right wing, linked to Hungarian irredentism and holding quasi-Fascist and secessionist positions, increasingly gained power (e.g., Skalnik Leff 1988). Thus, in the final years of the First Republic, the Slovak requests had a much more radical undertone than was earlier the case, in addition to the usual regional tensions.

8. The parties of the smaller ethnic minorities, such as the Magyars and the Poles, generally formed electoral cartels and thus managed to elect a handful of MPs. In the very first years of the republic, most of these did not recognize the legitimacy of the Czechoslovak state, while in later years the representatives of each small group held different positions on this point (Lipscher 1979b, Hromadko, Richter, and Wende 1981).

9. As explained in chapter 2, the DNP and the DNSAP held nondemocratic ideals and were fervent partisans of *Anschluss* to Germany. The DNP emerged in 1919 from a merging and reorganization of nationalist groups in the Sudeten regions and, during the first years of the republic, its leader Lodgman von Auen was the most important political figure of the negativist front. The DNSAP, founded in 1918, was the successor

of the *Deutsche Arbeiterpartei* founded in 1903–04 and active in the Habsburg Empire, and held anticapitalist and anti-Marxist corporatist ideals. The birth of the Czechoslovak Republic caused a strong accentuation of the nationalistic elements in the party's doctrine, and the progressive emergence of Hitler's NSDAP in Germany also had a growing influence on the party's positions (Hapala 1968).

10. The precise percentage is difficult to calculate, since the Communist Party also competed in German-inhabited regions. The SdP, however, emerged as the biggest vote-getter in the elections of 1935, although the electoral system slightly underrepresented it and entitled it to one seat fewer than the Czechoslovak Agrarians (which obtained 1,116,593 votes and 45 seats vis-à-vis 1,249,530 votes and 44 seats for the SdP). On the Czechoslovak electoral law, see Braunias (1932) and Trojanec and Fiseer (1935).

11. Before Hitler's rise to power, the activist parties were in principle opposed to any repressive measure against the negativist extreme right, fearing that such measures would have made them "martyrs of the Sudeten German cause," which would have reverberated negatively on the activists' popularity in the Sudeten regions. These considerations increasingly gave way to concerns, as the totalitarian nature of the Third Reich became clear also outside Germany. Important leaders of the German Agrarians and the Christian Social Party expressed more openly their allegiance—and that of the German minority—to the Czechoslovak Republic. Meanwhile the German Social Democrats soon openly advocated the ban of the DNSAP. They declared their readiness to defend Czechoslovakia and talked about "the existence of the State as a bulwark against Fascist barbarism" in the official party press. Shortly afterwards the German Social Democrats for the first time gave signs of a positive attitude towards the Czechoslovak army (Brügel 1967, 229–37).

12. As Miller has put it, "throughout Švehla's illness from late 1927 until 1933 the Agrarian Party had no head, merely wings" (Miller 1999, 174). Švehla died in 1933, and for two years the chairman seat was left vacant, until in 1935 Rudolf Beran was appointed to appease the internal right wing of the party for the appointment of his rival Milan Hodža to the premiership (Heumos 1979, 371ff.).

13. On the composition and the political importance of the Castle, see the essays in Bosl (1973–1974) and, more specifically, Lemberg (1973).

14. The president was elected by the National Assembly, a special organ formed by the members of the two chambers, with a supermajority vote.

15. The main outlines of the political project of the right wing of the Czech Agrarians are reported in detail in the reports to the German government made by the German envoy in Prague, Dr. Walter Koch, a very precious source of information on the "backstage" of Czechoslovak politics in those years. The general outlines of this political project, including the explicit reference to the "15 or 20 seats" that the SHF would have been able to obtain, are repeated in other German diplomatic documents dating from those months (see Brügel 1967, 257–61).

16. Henlein gave an important speech—one often quoted in support of his political moderation—of this political tenor in October 1934 at Bömisch-Leipa.

17. Stoupal was not an important political figure on the national level, and was not even an MP. He was, however, an important leader within the party by virtue of his large following among the Moravian Agrarians and of his personal position in the agricultural economy (Brügel 1967, 260).

18. At that moment the coalition was composed of the Czechoslovak Agrarians, the

Czech People's Party, the two Czechoslovak Socialist parties ČNSS and ČSDSD, and the German Agrarians and Social Democrats.

19. It must be remembered that Hodža had been one of the Castle's fiercest adversaries in the past. For example, Hodža actively maneuvered to block the reelection of Masaryk to the presidency in 1927, with the goal of replacing him with Švehla and becoming prime minister in the latter's place. This plan was blocked by Švehla himself, who considered Masaryk an important stabilizing factor in the political scene, and who, although not always on his same political wavelength, was the president's personal friend. The failure of the plan was one of the reasons for Hodža's exclusion from the cabinet in February 1929 (Mamatey 1973; Miller 1999, 178)

20. One passage read, "If in democratic elections more than 1.25 million Germans electors have given their support to the SdP we must take this into account and draw the necessary consequences" (quoted in Brügel 1967, 337).

21. A further area of activism in defense of the republic by Beneš was foreign policy, a detailed analysis of which would, however, fall outside the boundaries of this study. It is important to keep in mind, though, that since the SdP was backed by the Nazi Reich, especially after 1934, foreign policy constituted a crucial field of action for the defense of the republic from its *internal* enemies as well. Beneš was extremely active in this field first in his capacity as foreign minister and then as president—Karel Krofta, his successor as foreign minister, was very close to him (on Czechoslovak foreign policy during those years, see, e.g., Lukes 1996).

22. A further course of action involved the improvement of the country's capability for military defense, mainly in reaction to the increasingly dangerous threat constituted by Nazi Germany. The construction of fortifications in the regions bordering Germany went forward at a tremendous pace. Overall military expenditure between 1936 and 1938 constituted 50.6 percent of total public expenditure (Hauner 1986, 89; see also Teichova 1988, 72).

23. Law of 15 November 1867. See text in Epstein (1932).

24. At the local level, the positions held by the representatives of the DNSAP and the DNP were redistributed informally (and without legal basis) among the other German parties (Beuve-Méry 1936, 110; Wiskemann 1967, 199).

25. Although it was formally possible to appeal court decisions before the Supreme Administrative Tribunal, de facto judicial control on this specific case was not activated. In fact, on rejecting the appeal against the dissolution decree of the DNSAP, the Supreme Administrative Tribunal also rejected the plea for the unconstitutionality of the law on the grounds that it lacked jurisdiction and referred the case to the Supreme Constitutional Tribunal, as that was the competent body. Evidently, however, nothing was done, because the members of the Supreme Constitutional Tribunal had not been reappointed after end of their term in 1931 (Loewenstein 1938a, 620).

26. The law was passed after Minister of Finance Alois Rasin was murdered in January 1923. Although there was no direct connection to the Communist Party, the murder was preceded by a vilification campaign against Rasin carried out by the leftist press during the fall of 1922 because of the economic difficulties of the country, as well as by a series of other attacks against important political figures (Loewenstein 1938a; Rothschild 1974, 107). The law introduced severe limitations on the freedom of the press, originally broadly granted by the constitution. It was modeled on similar legisla-

tion in the Weimar Republic also adopted after a political murder, that of Walther Rathenau (e.g., Jasper 1963; Gusy 1991).

27. In granting this protection from libel, the law even forbade references to any previous judicial sentence against the offended. Political parties enjoyed special protection from libel only if the attack against them was carried out through the press or before a large audience. The new measures against extremist propaganda were used against the HSL'S, whose requests for decentralization assumed increasingly radical tones in the second half of the 1930s (Hoensch 1979; Felak 1994). After a public attack on the government in August 1933, the official newspapers of the Slovak parties (the HSL'S and the Slovak National Party, which had split in 1932 from National Democracy to support the cause of Slovak regional government) were suspended, and about 150 people were arrested (they would receive amnesty in 1935).

28. The law was the subject of a lively debate among the constitutional lawyers of the time: see in particular Kier (1936); Laufke (1936); Sander (1936b; 1937); Steiner (1937); Thiele (1937–1938).

29. Resentment had already been created by a law passed in 1933 that made it necessary for elected mayors to obtain an authorization from the central government in order to exercise their powers (Wiskemann 1967, 244).

30. A resolution to this effect was passed in the National Assembly at the end of 1937 but never implemented (Brügel 1967, 313).

31. The figures come from Brügel (1967, 310); more precise figures are unavailable.

32. The "Aktivistische Zentralstelle," a screening office set up by the activist parties to monitor the results of the February 1937 Agreement, reports that conditions improved substantially, both in public commissions and in the use of the German language in the bureaucracy (Glück 1938; Brügel 1967, 597–98).

33. On 16 September 1937, for example, Prime Minister Hodža met Henlein, promising that local elections would soon be called (a favored theme of SdP propaganda) and that more Germans would be hired in the state bureaucracy. Henlein's answer was that he was not concerned with partial concessions, but rather with "a fundamental and legislative solution of the relations between Czechs and Germans in the State," a front on which Hodža made no concession (Slapnicka 1970, 80).

34. The DSAP had just changed its leader, substituting Ludwig Czech, also the representative of the party in government, with Wenzel Jaksch. Hodža suggested that Jaksch—in principle, more acceptable to the SdP than Czech, a Jew—be appointed minister in place of Czech. Henlein refused. Thus, Hodža was forced to offer as the official explanation of end of cooperation with the DSAP that the government had decided that it was not opportune to represent the German minority only with a single ideological party—an explanation that was very far from reality (Brügel 1967, 342–43).

35. The Czechoslovak generals, as reported in the minutes of a meeting with the president and the cabinet shortly after the Munich treaty, made clear that the operational plans of the Czechoslovak army were predicated on the assumption that a large part of the German troops would be occupied on the western front against France. The fortifications at the border with Germany were not completed in several regions and were nonexistent at what had been the Austrian border, which made the military situation of the country even more difficult. The intervention of the Soviet Union to protect Czechoslovakia against Germany was very difficult in practice, as the U.S.S.R.

bordered neither Czechoslovakia nor Germany, and the question of the "right of passage" of Soviet troops through the territory of adjacent states was far from resolved. Beneš did not press on Romania for allowing the passage of Soviet troops to help Czechoslovakia, since he feared that this would alienate him the support of Western powers. Moreover, even in the best of circumstances, the Red Army would not reach Moravia before six weeks, too long for the Czechoslovak army to hold out against the *Reichswehr* (Zeman 1997, 135–36; Slapnicka 1970, 91).

36. In Ribbentrop's words, quoted in Luža (1964, 132). Obviously it was important for the "link" not to be broken since it was functional to Hitler's policy to show that the SdP was willing to negotiate to protect the right of the German minority, against the supposed intransigence of the Czech government.

37. To reduce tensions, in mid-April 1938 Beneš had already ordered a political amnesty releasing 1,235 Sudeten Germans from jail.

38. Eighty-seven percent, if an estimate of the vote of the Communist Party in the German areas is considered.

39. Of no avail was the fact that the Czechoslovak government suspended police officials of the districts in which the incident was said to have happened, and the police president was forced to resign. British sources report that the incident had been "deliberately staged by the Sudeten representatives" (Luža 1964, 140).

CHAPTER FIVE: Belgium

Epigraph: Emmanuel Gérard (1985), 457.

1. This turn in foreign policy was inaugurated in 1936. It was called the "policy of independence-neutrality." In 1937 France and the United Kingdom officially freed Belgium from any obligations based on the Locarno Treaty (Spaak 1969; Brescianino 1979; Coolsaet 1988; also van Zeeland 1939).

2. Fifty-nine Catholic MPs occupied 245 positions; 19 Liberal MPs occupied 113 positions, and 17 Socialist MPs occupied 53 positions (Höjer 1946, 245).

3. Degrelle attracted the attention of many commentators in those years (see, among others, Arenstam 1936; Heberlein 1936; Shaw 1936, and the hagiographic Legros 1937; for more recent analyses, see Tarchi 1978; Frerotte 1987; Norling 1996).

4. Martens, a Flemish academic, had been a collaborator with the German occupants during World War I. At the end of 1938 he was made a member of the Royal Academy, which caused a lively discussion in the country, with strong polemics between Walloon and Flemish representatives (Höjer 1946).

5. One of the principal accusers of van Zeeland was convicted of libel in 1938.

6. In general terms, the 1939 elections restored the pre-1936 political landscape. As table 5.1 shows, The Liberals gained ten seats (from 23 to 33), as did the Catholics (63–73); the Socialist Party lost 6 seats (70–64). The Senate also had partial elections, the results of which went in the same direction.

7. The member organizations also had Flemish names: Federatie der Katholicke verenigen en Kringen, Christelijke Federatie van de Middenstand, Boerenbond, Algemeen Christelijk Werkersverbond.

8. The very break of Rex can be seen as a consequence of the strengthening of the internal discipline and central direction of the Catholic Party, an entirely new element for the party, which had always had very loose internal discipline, allowing it to

encompass ideologically heterogeneous elements. Had the organization remained so loosely structured, the attempts from within the party to change the party's political line in favor of an alliance with Rex would probably have had a better chance of success. The reaction of Pierlot and his supporters therefore acquires even greater importance when seen in this light (see Gérard 1985, 456).

9. In a meeting of the *Fédération des Cercles Catholiques* held in Cortrai, Degrelle interrupted a speech of Paul Segers, then president of the Federation and a very important Catholic politician, minister, and businessman. The Rexist leader ascended the podium and delivered an unprecedentedly vehement attack against all Catholic politicians who had held positions in the economic-financial sphere. He denounced scandals and episodes of collusion, calling for the resignation of those involved. The episode got a great deal of attention in the press and in public opinion (Carsten 1976).

10. The exceptions to the incompatibility ruling were: when the management position was in a public enterprise (in which the Party would want to avoid leaving a free slot to the Liberals and the Socialists), when it was due to professional qualifications, and when it was due to patrimonial obligations.

11. During these months, Pierlot also repeatedly petitioned Cardinal van Roey, Archbishop of Malines and the highest authority of the Catholic hierarchy in Belgium, for a public condemnation of Rex, but the Cardinal never did so.

12. A Popular Front had been formally founded in Belgium in June 1936 on the basis of the success of the same political formula in France and Spain; although debate about this option had already started in political and intellectual circles in the fall of 1935, the proposal remained quite isolated. The Christian Labor Union had already refused to cooperate with the Communists a few days before the formal foundation of the Front, explicitly saying that "for the defense of democracy" the group would have to find better allies. In July 1936 Jean Bodart, a leading figure in the Catholic left wing, clearly defended this point of view in a public intervention in the press. In August the Catholic trade unions adopted the same line. The Socialist Party and the Socialist trade unions expressed similar positions in September. Only a minority within the Socialists was in favor of this option—the same opponents to a center-based coalition that also voted against van Zeeland. This political project was, however, rejected by the most important political faction within the Socialists, the De Man-Spaak group, who favored a planned economy but on a different basis.

13. For example, there were informal contacts between Sap and Marcel-Henri Jaspar around August 1936, in which they discussed the possibility for the latter to join their project. Obviously, other figures from the Catholic right wing were also involved: just to give an example, on 30 August 1936 Senator de Dorlodot gave a public speech advocating the union of the "forces d'ordre," meaning by this the Catholics, the Liberals, Rex, and VNV (Gérard 1985, 465).

14. The Nazi government helped the VNV with support in kind, and *De Standaard* received support through the same channels in form of inexpensive paper (Gérard 1985).

15. After the defeat of Degrelle, these accusations were taken up again by some factions of the established parties—the Catholic right wing and some liberal circles—that were eager to get rid of van Zeeland, who was no longer politically necessary. A new campaign was already mounted in July 1937, after which a governmental inquiry was opened. Van Zeeland admitted that one part of the accusations against him was

true: he had paid his prime ministerial assistants with money taken from a special reserve of the Central Bank. In October 1937, after new revelations, the General Prosecutor decided to open a judicial inquiry on the Bank, and van Zeeland, whose cabinet had already been through a recent crisis due to internal disagreement in the coalition over the appointment of a new minister for justice, decided to resign, although the inquiry was not about him personally. Rex, of course, took up these accusations too, but by then it was too weak to regain its old positions. Moreover, the king intervened to make sure that the defection of the "right" of the tripartite coalition against van Zeeland did not spark a more severe case of instability. The government succeeding van Zeeland, led by Paul-Emile Janson, was based on the same political formula of the previous one (Höjer 1946).

16. It is often maintained that the Catholic Church, and in particular the Belgian episcopate, played a key role in the events leading to the political defeat of Rex. The public intervention of the Archbishop of Malines, Cardinal van Roey, against Degrelle—the "*coup de crosse*"—on the eve of the by-election, which the Rexist leader then lost to van Zeeland, is often cited in support of this view (e.g., Simon 1964; Ignazi 1994). However, documents show that the Cardinal's intervention was explicitly and urgently elicited by van Zeeland in person after Degrelle, in a speech on the eve of the by-election, had implied that the Cardinal would support him against the prime minister. Van Zeeland sent a message to the Cardinal, together with the newspaper cutting documenting Degrelle's statements, and urged him to take a position, which the Cardinal did in an intervention then reported in the press. In general, following Gérard (1985), the Belgian Church was very ambiguous in this difficult phase of Belgian politics, and was certainly not a staunch supporter of democracy.

17. The king also had formal prerogatives in other fields: he could preside over the Council of Ministries, refuse to sign bills and decrees, dissolve Parliament, influence the foreign and military policy of the government, but most of these formal powers had no real influence in practice (Rolin 1945).

18. The Socialists were divided into three factions: a minority supporting a Popular Front solution; the older generation centered around Emil Vandervelde, who wanted a Socialist-led government leaning more towards the left; and the strongest, the group around Hendrik De Man and Paul-Henri Spaak supporting a new van Zeeland cabinet.

19. Leopold III was very influential in several cabinet formations during these years. A similar intervention of his solved the crisis following the resignation of van Zeeland in October 1937, which sparked a crisis that lasted four weeks. The king solved the crisis in a similar way as he did in 1936 by summoning the leaders of the main factions of the three established parties to allow Janson to form a government, which they did shortly thereafter. After the resignation of Janson in May 1938, the king appointed Spaak and again used his influence to keep the crisis to a minimum—just two days. In the subsequent governmental crises, the king always steered the situation towards a tripartite coalition: Rex was always consulted formally (as all parties were), but was never considered as a candidate to enter the governmental majority (Höjer 1946, 299 and passim).

20. It was usual for the king to address the public directly on various matters, and although the main political forces normally accepted this royal prerogative, it provoked substantial constitutional controversy (Höjer 1946). While exercising this power, the King Leopold III was careful not to come out clearly in favor or against a specific political group, but in some circumstances the king made clear his aversion to the

Rexists. This was the case, according to some interpretations, in the public speech that Leopold III made on 7 November 1936. He accused the Rexists of sabotaging the nation: "The political climate of Belgium is against all forms of violence. . . . Like my predecessors I intend scrupulously to observe the rule which places the King above all party strife. But I have the right and the duty to draw the attention of my compatriots to the perils which must result from this kind of prolonged disorder" (quoted in Mallinson 1969, 105).

21. It seems, however, that the label "March on Brussels," echoing Mussolini's "Marcia su Roma," was not coined by Degrelle, who for his part did not express explicitly subversive goals for the demonstration (Étienne 1968, 120).

22. On that occasion, Degrelle was able to broadcast his speech from the Italian state radio in Turin thanks to the hospitality of the Italian Fascist government.

23. At the beginning of 1935 the Socialists, in response to the prohibition of a street demonstration by the Theunis Liberal-Catholic government, devised a response involving the resignation of a series of Socialist deputies together with their substitutes throughout the whole country, in order to prompt a series of by-elections that would destabilize the political situation and provide an opportunity for the social groups affected by the economic recession to protest. In the end, it was decided to implement this strategy only in Brussels, where the Socialist leader Paul-Henri Spaak resigned his parliamentary seat along with all of his substitutes. The party hoped for Spaak to obtain a plebiscite and to defeat the majority decisively. However, the Catholics and the Liberals did not accept the challenge and did not put up any candidates. The by-elections were held in April. In total, there were nine lists, among which were the Communists, the VNV, and the tiny "Parti Realiste," which obtained 15 percent of the vote—incidentally, it was this success by a nearly unknown party that prompted Degrelle to think that it was time for Rex to enter the electoral arena. Spaak was therefore reelected with about 120,000 votes on 380,000 total, but there were more than 130,000 empty and spoiled ballots. Thus, the tactics of the Socialists had a good result, but no triumph. However, by the time of the by-election, the conflict between the Socialists and the bourgeois parties was largely overcome: in March 1935—that is, even before the by-election took place—Spaak had become minister of public transportation and postal services in the first van Zeeland cabinet, which had replaced the one led by Theunis. Thus, it was agreed that he would fight a "moderate campaign" (Dumoulin 1999, 60).

24. In the 1939 parliamentary elections, Rex would only receive 4.4% of the votes, which corresponded to only about 2% of the seats, despite the very proportional electoral system in force in Belgium. On the Belgian electoral system of those years, see Braunias (1932) and Nohlen and Opiela (1969).

25. See appendix C for details.

26. The *Légion Nationale* was founded in 1922, and in its first years it was a small movement of veterans with little influence. In 1927 a new leader named Paul Hoornaert emerged, and the *Légion* developed into a paramilitary organization: it had between two and four thousand mobile troops in uniforms, equipped with helmets and sticks. The aim of these formations was not to stage a coup, but to "prepare for the day in which Belgium would be ripe for national revolution," a new era in which the legion would be the new aristocracy. They had severe street fights with Socialist militants. (Stengers 1965, 148–49).

27. In 1919 the *Katholieke Vlaamse Landsbond* (Flemish Catholic Peasants' League) drafted a "minimal program": Flemishization of schools at all levels and of justice and administration (in Flanders), division of the army in Flemish and Walloon units (each speaking its respective language), and reorganization of the central administration on the basis of regional-linguistic homogeneity criteria. The "minimalists" were in favor of this program, the "maximalists" of more radical measures. The minimalist program was to be reprised in the linguistic laws summarily described below (Mabille 1986).

CHAPTER SIX: Finland

Epigraph: Marvin Rintala (1962b), 3.

1. The bibliography on the Finnish Civil War is extensive: see, among others, Hampden Jackson (1940); Smith (1958); Manninen (1978); Klinge (1981); Alapuro (1988); Singleton (1989).

2. Two of the elected MPs were actually Communist. They demonstratively proposed in 1920 that the Finnish constitution (on which see Erich 1922 and Lavagna 1946) be changed to one based on the Soviet system. This kind of provocative action, as well as many forms of filibustering and obstructionism, was typical of the Communist parliamentary groups throughout the whole decade of the party's existence.

3. Although Kuusinen's line did not affect the revolutionary goals of the party, his interpretation that the Finnish masses were not yet "ready for revolution" would create some tension with the "émigré" SKP leadership and the Soviet authorities.

4. This was true despite the orthodox Marxist language of the party's official manifesto—unchanged since 1903—which did not correspond at all to the party's political strategy (Nousiainen 1971, 85). The radical language of the manifesto was probably a way of responding, with some paper concessions, to internal pressures coming from the left wing of the party, which was strong in the 1920s and particularly after the Congress of 1926.

5. This accusation was probably true. For example, in the Uusimaa province, where the leftists had won most of the fifteen delegates, the party direction enlarged the representative team to 26 people, appointing the additional 11 delegates from the center, without any election. These included Tanner (Upton 1973, 127).

6. In 1928 the Comintern proclaimed that the "third phase of capitalist development" had begun, characterized by a rapid intensification of the class war and a growing danger of imperialist war. The first priorities of the Communist movement were to avoid any form of compromise with the bourgeois system and to direct its attacks primarily at the Social Democrats. Abiding by these directives, the SAJ turned increasingly radical: in the summer of 1928 a great dock-workers' strike was launched; it lasted about a year and was seen as a great provocation from the moderate and right-wing parties, which claimed that it was done intentionally to weaken the position of Finland in the international timber market exactly when the Soviet Union was reentering the same market. The Finnish wood-processing industry employed between 30 and 40 percent of the national workforce, and wood-processing products constituted the main export commodity during the 1920s and 1930s (e.g., Karvonen 1999, 135). As part of this radical drive, in August 1929 the SAJ even withdrew from the ILO.

7. The Communists also managed to wrest control of several local newspapers and periodicals from the Social Democrats.

8. The only case of electoral cooperation between the SDP and the SSTP in national elections was the electoral alliance that the two parties formed in only one district (sparsely populated Oulu Northern) in the 1924 elections.

9. Other, less important, cases of cooperation include the opposition to custom duty on grain and the largely symbolic support given by the Social Democrats to the SSTP-initiated bill calling for the abolition of the Civil Guard (Mäkelä 1984, 161).

10. Mannerheim was commander in chief of the White Guards (on his profile, see Warner 1967; Rintala 1969; Jägersköld 1986; see also his memories, Mannerheim 1953). Svinhufvud was the prime minister of the "White" government during the Civil War (On Svinhufvud, see Tigerstedt 1936; Raikkönen 1938).

11. The first of these judgments was issued after the trial following the arrest of the members of the "domestic" headquarters of the SSTP, set up in Helsinki in May 1919 and lasting only two months before being discovered and disbanded by the police. In its sentence, the court ruled that the SSTP was the organ of a seditious conspiracy and that membership constituted a crime.

12. For example, in one year, the police arrested six secretaries of the party district of the province of Uusimaa, five from the province of Häme, and three from Sakaunta (Mäkelä 1984).

13. In the years that followed, the party would change its name again. For the sake of simplicity, I always refer to the "public" electoral organization of the Communists in Finland as SSTP.

14. As Upton rightly points out, 'this is an area in which precise quantification is impossible" (Upton 1973, 193).

15. For an account of the actions and methods of the Finnish secret police in the 1920s and 1930s, see Lackman (1987).

16. Several resounding events stirred up the political situation in those years: apart from the the woodworkers' strike of summer 1928 already mentioned, which went on for about a year, on 1 August 1929 the Communists planned a major mass demonstration in Helsinki, which was prohibited by the government. Other important events that caused a lively public debate were protests in Parliament by Communist MPs, the start of a hunger strike in support of imprisoned Communists, and the organization of a national strike by the SAJ.

17. The Lapua Movement was then "officially" founded in March 1930, with Vihtori Kosola (called "the Finnish Mussolini") at its head.

18. The Civil Guard (*Suolejuskunta*) was the national militia in which the victorious "White" army had been regimented after the Civil War of 1918.

19. As a reaction to the parliamentary vote on the press law, the Lapuans smashed the printing plant of the *Työn Ääni* ("The Voice of Labor"), a Communist newspaper published in Vaasa. A conservative newspaper exalted the deed as an event of great patriotic significance. The police authorities were largely passive and the minister of the interior responded to separate parliamentary questions by the Social Democrats and the Communists by minimizing the event as the action of a "small extremist fringe" of the Lapua Movement, which should not be held entirely responsible. After the debate and the public indignation following the episode, those responsible for the deed ostentatiously gave themselves up to the police, publicly signed a confession that they sent to the provincial governor, and returned to their home communities, which welcomed them like heroes (Rintala 1962a, 169). The trial was set for the beginning of

June in Vaasa, where the supporters of the Lapua Movement staged a series of mass demonstrations to exert pressure on the court. The growing tension escalated until the mob seized the court building and beat up several Communists, including some who were to appear as witnesses. The attorney for the printing plant was kidnapped and taken over the border into Sweden. This made it necessary to postpone the trial for a month. By that time the Lapua Movement had reached such proportions that the court case could no longer proceed (Micheles Dean et al 1934, 265). As a consequence of those events, the governor of the Vaasa province, a member of the Progressive Party and adversary of the Lapuans, was forced to resign, and a career officer and supporter of Lapua was appointed acting governor in his place.

20. Kallio was also forced to start extraparliamentary negotiations with Lapua leaders on their demands for changes in the Finnish governmental structures—reduction of the number of parliamentarians, more power to the cabinet, and so on. These negotiations did not, however, lead to anything concrete.

21. The Lapuans started pursuing this aim even before the march took place. On 5 July, two days before the march, while the Constitutional Committee of the Eduskunta was discussing the bills for anti-Communist legislation, members of the Lapua Movement entered the Parliament building, invaded the Committee's sessions and expelled from Parliament the two Communist members of the Committee.

22. Article 13 of the Organic Law of the Chamber of Deputies states that a five-sixths majority is needed to validate the arrest of an MP for opinions expressed during the exercise of his functions. Social Democratic opposition would have blocked such a decision. The consensus of the Chamber would not have been needed had a tribunal decided in favor of the arrest (as article 14 states), but this was not the case.

23. The electoral alliances led to NC and NPP gaining respectively seven and four seats, while the Swedish People's Party and the Agrarians obtained respectively one and four seats less that they would have done if no alliances had been formed. Consistent with the typical political consequences of the d'Hondt system, the parties joining the alliance in the greatest number of districts (12), that is, NC and NPP, were most favored (the Agrarians only joined in 7 districts, and the Swedish People's Party in 2). In some districts where the Agrarian Party decided not to join the cartel, splinter groups from the party joined the alliance—which disfavored the party in the distribution of seats. The electoral isolation of the SDP, confronting these alliances, cost the party the loss of six seats (Furlani 1951; Törnudd 1968). The 1930 elections saw a much higher rate of electoral participation (65.9%) than the previous elections of 1929, when the turnout had been 55.6% (Flora et al. 1983).

24. The law on the State of War was passed before the elections of October 1930, when the bourgeois forces did not yet have the qualified majority necessary to amend the constitution. This law could be passed as an ordinary law on the basis of the constitution, which in article 16 provided for the possibility, in time of war, of reducing the scope of the fundamental rights of the citizens by a law enacted with a simple majority (Kastari 1960, 65).

25. The preexisting legislation in the same fields was much less strict. Before the new laws, public meetings were subject to a 1907 law, whereby all a citizen wanting to organize a meeting in a public place had to do was notify the police beforehand. Freedom of association was regulated by a law of 1919, in which the only limitation was set by the "law or good taste." Administrative officials could suspend an association,

and bans were only possible by court decision. In addition, the limitation on the freedoms of speech and of the press contained in the law of 1919 regulating the matter were substantially less strict and more general than those passed in 1930–31 (Nousiainen 1971, 152).

26. After the repression of 1930–31, the only kind of activity open to the Finnish Communists was underground activity, by its very nature subject to harsh police repression, as the figures reported in table 6.3 show for the years up to 1935. In June 1931 the Profintern decided that the "Finnish Red Trade Unions" should continue their (illegal) existence, and at the same time the Communists carried on seeking to infiltrate and disrupt the unions affiliated with the SAK. In 1933 the SKP ordered Communist voters to write the names of Communist candidates on the paper ballot even if no Communist party was actually competing (this was allowed by the electoral law), but this appeal was largely unsuccessful. In the same year, the secret state police managed once again to bring to light and disband most of the underground network that the SKP had reconstituted (Mäkelä 1984). After the "frontist" turn of the Comintern in 1935, SKP members generally cooperated with the Social Democrats in unions and workers' organizations but never again came close to constituting a threat to the democratic system (Matti 1966; Upton 1973).

27. Ståhlberg, who had repeatedly opposed the Lapuans in public interventions, was abducted with his wife on 14 October 1930 by Lapua members. They were released unharmed shortly afterwards. This event shocked a wide swath of public opinion. The press condemned the deed, as did many political leaders, even those who had opposed Ståhlberg's positions. The scandal was worsened by the fact that, as it turned out, General Kurt Wallenius, the Chief of Staff of the Finnish Army, had planned and directed the deed, together with other high-ranking officers. Wallenius was removed from his position but then, given the lenient attitude of the courts toward the Lapuans, was acquitted in July 1931. He was appointed secretary-general of the Lapua Movement shortly after his trial.

28. The term *Jäger,* the German word for "hunters," was applied to those Finnish soldiers and officers who were trained militarily in Germany and had fought in World War I on the German side, returning to Finland in 1918 to help the "White" forces (Turpeinen 1987). On the political orientations of this "generation" of the Finnish right wing, see Rintala (1962a).

29. From the guidelines given by the founding congress of the movement to the directing committee: "The goal of the IKL is to establish a broad White front to act, on the basis of law and justice, to annihilate all that which is Red. This action will be aimed not only against Communism, but also against Socialism, which seeks to destroy the patriotic, religious, and nationalist spirit" (quoted in Rintala 1962a, 222). The emphasis on the creation of a "broad White front" clearly suggests that the founders did not want to create a new political party; the stress on "law and justice" emphasizes the respect for public order.

30. The Academic Karelia Society, the most influential right-wing association in Finland, was a particular supporter of the IKL. Most of its members ran for elections on IKL lists, and there was also significant overlap in the directorates of the two organizations (Rintala 1962a and b).

31. The Progressive Party and the Swedish People's Party enjoyed in total only 16% of the seats after the 1933 elections and only 14% after the 1936 elections (see table 6.1).

32. Paasikivi had been prime minister in 1918, and, although he remained a member of the NC, he had not held any state or party office since 1920. Paasikivi was still one of the most prestigious and most highly respected public figures in Finland. He was also the head of one of Finland's two largest banks, the Kansallis-Osake-Pankki, from which position he had financially supported the National Coalition Party during the 1920s.

33. Although Paasikivi, by his own admission, had had strong objections to parliamentary government and democracy in previous years, in a later phase his ideas developed in such a way as to differentiate him clearly from the radicalism of the IKL. A report of these opinions shows the classical opposition between conservatism and right-wing extremism: "Whatever the defects of political parties, it was childish fancy to assume that a free society could exist without them. Such a free democratic society was the highest political order men had yet attained, and it was worthy of preservation. Enforcement of conformity must therefore be rejected. The substance of conservatism did not involve the destruction of parliamentary government, the entire overthrow of the state machinery or the destruction of personal freedom, all of which characterized the totalitarian regimes. Conservatism involved instead the principle . . . that all change must suit the habits and traditions of the nation involved. Evolution, not destruction, was the basis of conservatism" (quoted from writings by Paasikivi in Rintala 1962b, 233).

CHAPTER SEVEN: Defense of Democracy

Epigraph: Juan J. Linz (1978a), 50.

1. The Communist challenge was strongest in Finland, Germany, and Czechoslovakia, while in pre-Fascist Italy and Belgium the Communists were relatively weak. In Italy, the radical wing of the Socialists was always very influential, though, and managed to dominate the party completely during the political crisis that would lead to the establishment of the Fascist regime.

2. The Lapua Movement was not a party, but its emergence prompted the National Coalition party to embrace its goals completely, thus offering the Movement a party and parliamentary outlet. Unlike in Czechoslovakia and Belgium, in Finland the government was not center-based: due to the heritage of the Civil War, any difference existing among the "White" parties—and some would soon emerge—was overshadowed by the postwar right-left cleavage. The extremist turn of NC made the situation of the Finnish party system more similar to that of the other countries analyzed above, but one important difference remained: given the large popularity of Lapua in those years, the antisystem party (in this case the National Coalition) did have centrifugal effects on the political competition, but at the same time it was not excluded from government, as extreme right-wing parties had always been in Belgium and Czechoslovakia.

3. In those years, the magistracy in general treated Fascists and Socialists (and later Communists) convicted for cases of political violence quite differently, being more severe with the latter and more forgiving with the former (Candeloro 1978, 347–49). An analogous phenomenon could be observed in Weimar Germany during the crisis of the early 1930s (e.g., Winkler 1994).

4. The coalition was formed by the Social Democratic Party (*Sozialdemokratische Partei Deutschlands,* SPD), the Catholic Center Party (*Zentrum*), the Bavarian People's Party (*Bayerische Volkspartei*—BVP), and two liberal groups, the German Democratic

Party (*Deutsche Demokratische Partei*—DDP, moderate left-wing) and the German People's Party (*Deutsche Volkspartei*—DVP, moderate right-wing).

5. Hindenburg made clear in a declaration that came out in the press that he would "use all constitutional means to carry out a timely regulation of the financial situation." After this declaration, the SPD leadership could not ignore the fact that there was an alternative to the presence of the Social Democrats in the government, namely a government supported by the president and governing through presidential decrees (Huber 1981). That this was a practically possible alternative was clear from the precedent set by the Social Democratic Friedrich Ebert, who during his mandate as president (1919–25) made frequent use of decrees (Gusy 1991).

6. The specific conflict was over whether to cover the increased financial needs for unemployment benefits by reducing the benefit itself, by increasing taxes, or by charging employers with a higher contribution. Although this conflict, which ultimately led to the fall of the Müller cabinet, was over more than the "0.5 percent contribution" (from the proposed increase for the employers, supported by the SPD and refused by the DVP) and involved general lines of fiscal policy at a difficult moment for the country, it was clear to the parties of the coalition that its collapse at that moment was unlikely to be followed by a cabinet that remained within the frame of parliamentary government (Huber 1981).

7. The SPD, the Communist KPD, and the NSDAP voted in favor of the motions, all other parties against.

8. In July 1930 the government was defeated on important budgetary measures, which it reinstated as presidential decrees. Here began a period in which the political equilibrium would be increasingly less dependent on the interplay of political parties and increasingly more dependent on the head of state and the circles around him. The SPD and the KPD presented separate motions to annul the decrees, as the Constitution allowed the Parliament to do. These motions were approved by Parliament, despite the support for Brüning from part of the DNVP group. Thus Hindenburg declared the dissolution of the Reichstag and reinstated the measures in a new emergency act.

9. This outcome was probably not difficult to predict, since the Nazis had already scored major gains in recent regional and local elections, drawing support away from the centrist parties on which Brüning hoped to found his government. Moreover, the moderate part of the DNVP—a possible ally of the government—did not have enough time to present itself to the voters and compensate for the predictable losses of the center.

10. The PSLI fell back from 156 to 123 seats, but the newly founded Communist Party (*Partito Comunista d'Italia,* PCd'I) received fifteen places in Parliament.

11. In the first half of 1921, which included the electoral campaign for the parliamentary elections, Fascists destroyed more than 700 socialist and union installations including print shops, newspaper sites, cultural circles, party sections, cooperatives and workers' leagues, and so on (e.g., Candeloro 1978, 353).

12. The Bonomi government, while showing in general more tolerance for Fascist violence, adopted a repressive policy against the "arditi del popolo," a militia including personnel from several left-wing parties that was created with the aim of responding to the military attacks of the Fascists (Candeloro 1978, 376).

13. A Liberal Party would only be founded in October 1922 (Galli 1974).

14. Giolitti also proposed the formation of a political majority that would have

changed the electoral system back to the one in force before 1919 (based on single-member districts and therefore disfavoring mass parties in favor of local notables), then dissolve the Chamber and create a more manageable Parliament, but it failed. Giolitti's argument was that the PR system was adopted by a Chamber that lasted—because of the war—one year longer than its mandate, therefore making it illegitimate. This strategy had little hope of being enacted, but the very fact that it was proposed shows the deadlock of the moderate political forces.

15. The same proposal was in fact approved by the Socialist union confederation CGdL around the same time. The leader of the moderate wing of the Socialists, Filippo Turati, had a formal meeting with the king about the proposal, but it backfired, causing the expulsion of himself and the leaders of the moderate wing from the party.

16. Various formulae were proposed and rejected by crossing vetoes of the various groups—a coalition of all parties excluding only the Communists was blocked by the PPI, a center coalition excluding Socialists, Communists, and Fascists was blocked by the right-wing Liberals, and a center-left coalition supported by the moderate wing of the Socialists was blocked by Giolitti, who opposed a cooperation between PPI and PSI and a cabinet that made anti-Fascist opposition its political basis (Candeloro 1978, 394–95).

17. The only reaction was a disciplinary charge initiated by the Ministry of Defense against General Emilio De Bono, who had participated in the organization of the "milizia" (Candeloro 1978, 406). Struck by the lack of reaction from the government to the reorganization of the Fascist militia, Mussolini remarked that "if in Italy there were a government worth their name, they should outlaw us right now and send the police to occupy our sections" (quoted in De Felice 1966, 317).

18. The Fascist squads, in the night between 27 and 28 October, occupied public institutions in several provinces, and several Fascist leaders visited the editorial offices of the most important newspapers, "inviting" them not to stand in the way of the "Fascist revolution." Incredibly, Facta went home to sleep after his meeting with the king (De Felice 1966, 358).

19. On 26 October, the minister of war had alerted the peripheral military authorities to be ready to take over the administration of public powers in their provinces (Repaci 1972).

20. The military advisers told the king that while the army officers would follow any order, "it was better not to put their loyalty to test" (De Felice 1966, 362). On the role of Freemasonry, which the Fascists used, in influencing some high military authorities in this crucial circumstance, see De Felice (1966, 353–55) and Mola (1990).

21. After initial clashes with some components of the majority supporting his cabinet, Mussolini managed to stabilize his power thanks to an electoral reform (the so-called *legge Acerbo*) that allowed the Fascists, still in alliance with large sectors of the Liberals and now also with right-wing Catholics, to have a large majority in the Chamber after the 1924 elections.

22. The Prussian government finally repealed the ban on the dissolved militias, although Braun made it a condition that the *Stahlhelm* leaders acknowledge the legitimacy of the ban. Hindenburg publicly expressed his disagreement with this condition.

23. This "timid" attitude of the SPD throughout the crisis of the Weimar Republic is the basis of the criticism of the party's strategy made by Matthias (1966). It is to be noted that, paradoxically, this led to a situation in which, among the components of his

fledgling parliamentary basis, the SPD was the one that caused Brüning the fewest problems, while the smaller conservative formations *Wirtschaftspartei, Landvolk,* and, to some extent, the right-wing liberal DVP were much more difficult to control, as they looked at a Hugenberg-Hitler government with relative equanimity.

24. General Kurt von Schleicher was one of the most important of Hindenburg's advisers; until the spring of 1931 his position on the major issues was quite in line with that of Brüning. After that, however, as the right-wing pressures against Brüning increased and the economic crisis deepened, he started to change his attitude. Like Hindenburg, he was subjected to incessant pressures from groups representing the powerful landowners of the Eastern regions of the Reich that opposed the cooperation between centrists and SPD in Prussia. He also perceived the growing pro-Nazi sympathies in the officer corps. What Schleicher wanted to avoid was, on the one hand, the danger of a civil war brought on by increasing political violence and, on the other, the danger of a Polish invasion in eastern Silesia that he thought could come about because of the *Reichswehr* being occupied with a simultaneous insurrection of Nazis and Communists. His strategy to avoid these problems was to find a *modus vivendi* with Hitler. So he started to use his influence on the president to achieve this goal. He could have timely knowledge of Brüning's decisions through Erwin Planck, an associate who held a key post in the Chancellery. To keep the Nazis out of power, Brüning was counting on Hindenburg's personal aversion for Hitler and his movement, but the increasing pressure from the right and the increased weakness and dependence of Hindenburg on his advisers weakened the Chancellor's position.

25. In the 1932 presidential election, Hindenburg was supported by the democratic parties, summoned by Brüning to oppose the candidacy of Hitler, the main competitor in that election. Hindenburg had clearly declared that he would not act in representation of the political forces that supported him in his reelection, and indeed after his reelection the influence of his political advisers, now supporting more strongly an alliance with the Nazis, grew.

26. *Landtag* elections were held in Prussia, Bavaria, Wuerttemberg, Anhalt, and Hamburg; in all, more than 80% of the electorate was called to vote. The NSDAP roughly doubled its votes in comparison with September 1930: in Prussia it obtained 36.2%, in Bavaria 32.5%, in Wuerttemberg 26.4%, in Anhalt 40.8%, in Hamburg 31.3% (Milatz 1966).

27. In Schleicher's view, "essentially the Nazis were little children. . . . One must take by their hand and guide them" (Dorpalen 1964, 311).

28. However, as explained in chapter 2, militant democracy should not be assimilated to outright authoritarianism because empirically, no democracy is entirely tolerant vis-à-vis every kind of political opinion expressed by individuals or groups, in the interwar years as well as now.

29. The table indicates the year in which the legislation in each specific area was passed. A *C* after the year indicates that an anti-extremist measure was incorporated into the constitution of that country. Parentheses indicate that legislation in a certain area preexisted the period on which this analysis is concentrated (1919–39).

30. Details on anti-extremist legislation in Czechoslovakia, Finland, and Belgium are in appendix C.

31. No special anti-extremist legislation was adopted in Italy between 1919 and 1924. The 1848 "*Statuto albertino*" Constitution only referred to the law for the regulation of

the freedom of the press and assembly in public places. General norms on public order were then included in laws passed in 1865. The "*legge di pubblica sicurezza*" (public safety law) of 30 June 1889, no. 6144, the first ad hoc piece of legislation on the matter, included the possibility of declaring the state of siege in cases of emergency and introduced limitations to the freedom of the press and assembly, mainly directed at anarchist groups and propaganda. General norms on the protection of personal honor were present in the new criminal code (*Codice Penale Zanardelli*) approved in 1889. In 1899 the government failed to receive the support of Parliament for new public order legislation, which was then adopted in form of decrees (the "Pelloux decrees"), but the Supreme Court refused to enforce them.

32. Important presidential decrees "against political excesses" and "for the protection of internal peace" were issued in June and December 1932, respectively. Further interventions on the matter came in March, April, May, July, August, and November of the same year (Gusy 1991; Blomeyer 1996).

33. At that moment party militias of all political tendencies were active: the Nazi SA, the right-wing "*Stahlhelm,*" the moderate left-wing "*Reichsbanner*," and the Communist "*Rote Frontkämpferbund,*" which had been banned after the disorders of May 1930, but continued its existence underground.

34. Some constitutional aspects of the decrees further reveal its nature as a "tactical weapon" in the service of a (naïve) political project, rather than as a means to protect democracy. Despite its general reference to "protection of State authority," the decree provided for the immediate dissolution of the SA and SS on the basis of *specific acts of political violence* carried out by the SA. It left unanswered the questions of *why* specific acts by specific sections of the SA should lead to the dissolution of the entire organization rather than to the prosecution of individual culprits.

35. This was certainly the case in the prosecution of the Czech Fascists and the Slovak extreme nationalists between 1929 and 1931. Masaryk had a decisive influence in staging the trials against Vojtech Tuka, leader of the extremist wing of the HSL'S, and Radola Gajda, leader of the NOF, both of whom were convicted. The two trials also served Masaryk's political goal of discrediting the HSL'S and the right-wing forces within the establishment (National Democracy and some Agrarian circles) who had secretly supported and on some occasions overtly sympathized with the Fascists. In 1931, another important Fascist leader, Alexander Pergler, was deprived of his parliamentary seat: found to be an American and not a Czechoslovak citizen, he was expelled from the country. The third Fascist leader of national stature, Jiří Stříbrný, was indicted for corruption. However, he was an influential publisher, and he threatened to reveal secrets about his adversaries in his newspapers. For some reason, the court failed to convict him (Mamatey 1973; Kelly 1995).

36. The Catholic Party had a different strategy, however, vis-à-vis the Flemish nationalists of the VNV, with whom there were intense negotiations in 1936–37. Despite the failure of the political project of the "*Vlaamse concentratie*" (see chapter 5), it seems that these negotiations were more than merely tactical in nature, paralleled as they were by important internal reforms of the organization of the Catholic Party involving a redefinition of its relation with the Flemish ethnic group.

37. Moreover, the repressive strategies are controversial from a normative point of view, so the whole front, whether in the guise of the government or of the majority

supporting it, will pay the political cost of supporting them before the public—again for the likely benefit of only one of the parties.

38. The losses of the other Sudeten German activist parties, the DSAP and the DCVP, had a similar magnitude. Even in Finland, where Lapua did not fight elections independently, its party outlet NC increased its electoral support by 50 percent in 1930, while the Agrarians registered some losses.

39. The Sudeten German activist parties were also fully included in the negotiations for the presidential elections in Czechoslovakia (see table B.2 in appendix B).

40. The Lophem "Accord" was largely the initiative of King Albert I, who summoned to his residence in Lophem the main personalities of the Catholic, Liberal, and Socialist parties, and purposefully did not call for the representatives of the traditional Catholic wing, who had governed the country in the prewar years. The agreement gave rise to a government of national union (called "the Lophem cabinet") that saw the participation of the Liberals, the Socialists, and the Catholics. After this and the subsequent introduction of the universal suffrage, "political power was transferred into the hands of a new elite" (Witte and Craeybeckx 1987, 162).

41. It is possible that the inclusion model works better in other contexts, for example in the attitude of liberalizing Arab states towards Islamic fundamentalist parties (e.g., Hudson 1995; Helmy 2003), although the evidence is still mixed and inconclusive.

42. There are only very partial exceptions to this rule, such as the support of the Communist Party to van Zeeland in the 1937 by-election and the support of the Communists to the election of Beneš to the presidency in 1935. Both episodes were due to the changed strategy of the Comintern, now supporting large alliances against Fascism, than to any genuine integration of those parties in the political life of those countries.

43. The resort to inclusive strategies also serves the need to attenuate the unpopularity that repressive measures of democratic defense are likely to have in many sectors of the democratic public. The appeals to the extremist electors, the policy concessions to their more moderate sectors, the tactical negotiations, and so on, may have the primary goal of winning back to the system parts of the antisystem groups, but they also send a powerful message to the "neutral" part of the public that the problem is not being addressed with repressive (and therefore antidemocratic) means only. The prospect of mere unpopularity, however, becomes a less urgent concern when democracy is being threatened by antisystem actors as strong as those analyzed here.

44. The thesis according to which repressive actions would fail to achieve their intended aim and actually generate more support for the extremists is often endorsed. According to this view, repression creates "martyrs" and is therefore counterproductive, while alternative courses of action such as tolerance or incorporation of extremists constitute superior strategies. While this might be true in other contexts, the historical cases analyzed here show instead that repression, or at least direct confrontation with strong extremists, was actually a very important factor in determining the victory of democratic forces in the struggle with extremism. In the cases of breakdown considered here, there is no element that supports the "martyr's thesis." In Italy, the lack of repression against the Fascists helped their final victory, if anything, and was not determined by normative concerns rather than by political maneuvering. In Weimar, the emergency decrees of 1931–32 did not have the effect of restoring public order in a

democratic framework primarily because the democratic forces were divided and could not agree on a common platform of defense against extremists, not because such decrees created "martyrs" among the Nazis. Moreover, in interwar Europe the balance of the opposite strategy, that is, political inclusion pure and simple, possibly with the illusion that this would either moderate or weaken the extremists, is negative, at least in the cases where antisystem forces were strong and aggressive: in Italy and Germany, Fascists and Nazis could count on the support of other groups to fulfill their projects, exploiting the internal division of democratic forces. In sum, the argument that the ghettoization of extremists increases their destructive potential—and therefore inclusion is better—does not work for the kind of extremist challenges active in interwar Europe.

CHAPTER EIGHT: Conclusions

Epigraph: Aviezer Tucker (1999), 272, n. 2.

1. In some cases, this claim is made explicit. So Luebbert, for example: "That so many studies have focused on polarization as the key to explaining the collapse of some interwar democracies can itself be explained by the choice of cases such studies have employed and the comparisons they have made. Almost always, they have contrasted, often implicitly, the breakdown of democracy in Germany or Italy with its interwar continuity in Britain. I hope that now it is clear that this contrast is patently irrelevant" (Luebbert 1991, 309). Similar observations are made by Rueschemeyer, Huber Stephens, and Stephens (1992).

2. The choice of a certain research design is not theory-neutral: large-scale comparisons favor structuralist analysis, whether carried out with the tools of quantitative analysis or not, while process-oriented historical studies, if limited to the short term, favor actor-based approaches (Ragin 1987; Rueschemeyer, Huber Stephens, and Stephens 1992, 32-33).

3. In Lipset's original study, "unstable" European democracies and bases of breakdown are lumped together and contrasted with "stable" European democracies. Thus Czechoslovakia and Finland end up in the same category as Italy and Germany, with no way to distinguish between them.

4. The importance of a "previous experience with democracy" in favoring survival, also underlined by Huntington (Huntington 1991), does not explain the cases of Czechoslovakia and Finland, which had only recently become democratic.

5. Alapuro's studies on the political mobilization of the agrarian population in Finland, which also take their lead from Moore's thesis, show that the situation is far from clear in this respect. For example, in Ostrobothnia, the region in which the Lapua Movement gathered the largest support, *both* the National Coalition *and* the Agrarian Party were traditionally strong. The relative economic backwardness of the region might tend to explain the support for Lapua among small landowners with the cultural predominance of the traditional class of large landowners but, according to Alapuro himself, this is merely a hypothesis that still needs to be confirmed by future empirical research (Alapuro 1976a, 71; 1976b).

6. In a more recent intervention, Stephens and Kümmel reclassify Finland as a case of "partial eclipse of democracy." In order to support their interpretation, in absence of empirical evidence from Finland, they refer to Estonia, where the expropriation of 97

percent of large estates by the government in 1919 and the subsequent creation of a small landowning class of peasants favored the democratization of the country. Estonia's democratic regime, however, collapsed in 1936, but the authors underline that the coup d'état of that year was "aimed at excluding the extreme right" and "did not result in the establishment of an exclusionary authoritarian regime," resorting to the counterfactual argument that "had the state not been invaded and its autonomous existence ended, one can at least envisage that full democracy might have been re-established and thus that Estonia might more properly be classified with Finland as a case of partial breakdown and re-equilibration" (Stephens and Kümmel 2002, 57–58).

7. None of these ad hoc arguments is entirely convincing either: considering the creation of a new army as the equivalent of a "modern revolutionary break with the past"—important for development towards democracy according to Moore's original thesis—since it equates the displacement of an old military establishment from power positions, should by definition apply to all new democracies, which if anything were more fragile than the older ones. The fact that the Czech bourgeoisie was "relatively more liberal" than the bourgeoisie in other countries is simply stated, not measured in any way. Finally, that the Czech lands had a large working class (which Stephens and Kümmel consider as a positive factor for democracy) given their comparatively high level of industrialization is certainly true, but Czechoslovakia also had one of the strongest Communist Parties in Europe, which was a determined *opponent* of democracy at least until 1935.

8. In general, and quite unlike the rich and documented accounts that the author provides for political developments in other countries, Luebbert's analysis of Czechoslovakia contains several inaccuracies and does not satisfactorily account for the political dynamics in the country: he incorrectly mentions German parties as being part of the Petka and ignores important aspects of the development of the dialectic between activism and negativism in the Sudeten German camp in the earlier decade (Luebbert 1991, 291, 293).

9. Luebbert's classification of Finland as a dictatorship not only is at odds with the classification of the same case by other scholars in the field and unconvincing from the theoretical point of view, it seems again to be based on an inaccurate interpretation of several developments in Finnish politics during those years. Contrary to what Luebbert says, for example, only the Communist unions were outlawed, and the Socialist Party, although excluded from power, was not "in constant danger of dissolution" (1991, 261). This was only the position of the extreme right after 1931–32, and should not be confused with the position of the large majority of the parties in government (e.g., Kalela 1976).

10. An even stronger danger was constituted by the Civil Guard—much more than the army—and Svinhufvud's intervention was crucial also in that respect (see chapter 6).

11. The argument according to which "the presence of conservative parties in the coalition staved off serious defections from capitalists and the military," making it therefore an important element in "placating these two forces" (Bermeo 2003, 251), hence favoring the survival of democracy, seems clearly inspired by the detrimental effect on democracy's stability that the extremist turn of Conservatives had in Italy and Germany—but this again finds little support in our survival cases. In both Czechoslovakia and Finland the Conservatives had turned towards extreme and quasi-Fascist

positions immediately before the worst phase of the crisis (in 1934 in Czechoslovakia, and in 1930 in Finland), and were thus excluded from the democratic coalition during the crisis. Even in Belgium, the democratic front came together largely against the most conservative forces of the political establishment. Yet the military did not play any role in the crisis in two of the three cases, and democracy survived in all three.

12. The view that divides political development into "critical" and "stable" periods is much older than this literature, and typical of social sciences as well as political history: an example can be found in Polanyi, who speaks of "critical periods" and "connecting stretches of time"—with the attention of the analyst to be fully given to the former (Polanyi 1944, 4). In sociology, essentially the same view is held by authors such as Swidler, who speaks of "unsettled" and "settled" times (Swidler 1986), or Abbott, who identifies "turning points" and "trajectories" (Abbott 2001, 258). Recently, several social scientists have referred to this view of social and political development by using the concept, derived from evolutionary theory, of "punctuated equilibrium," in which short outbreaks of allopathic speciation are succeeded by longer phases of incremental evolution (e.g., Krasner 1984 and 1988, Hall 1993; for a recent encompassing account of the theory of punctuated equilibrium in the biological sciences, see Gould 2002).

13. As Polanyi put it, in the analysis of "critical periods . . . time expands," as must our analysis (Polanyi 1944, see also Lindenfeld 1999, 244–45). "Only narration . . . can deal adequately with the multifarious contingencies of human affairs, including fortuitous circumstances (better known as luck)" (Turner 1999, 302). The integration of theory and detailed narrative is one of the elements of the current reflection on the use of multimethod approaches in comparative analyses, a research frontier in comparative methodology (e.g., Bennett 2002; Lieberman 2002).

14. Obviously, the identification of the levels of change and stability and of the significance of specific events for each level is a matter of theoretical choice (e.g., Shermer 1995, 71; Thelen 2003, 213, n. 12). Change in civil and political society, for example, *did* in fact occur in Finland, Belgium, and Czechoslovakia as a consequence of the crises that unfolded in those countries. However, change did *not* take place at the *regime* level—at least as a consequence of extremist attacks against the system—which is the one of theoretical interest here.

15. This is not the dominant view in the literature on institutional change quoted here, in which crises and turning points are normally conceptualized as necessarily producing change (e.g., Berins Collier and Collier 1991, 29–30; Abbott 2001, 245). The reason for this in all likelihood lies in the different focus of those analyses, which most often concentrate on periods of institutional reproduction, then proceed back in history to identify the origins of the institutions in a moment of crisis.

16. This change of perspective corresponds to that from *ex post* (hindsight) to *ex ante* (foresight) discussed in chapter 2 about the assessment of ideological antisystemness—indeed, it is a logical consequence of it. That regime breakdown is a possibility that might *not* take place corresponds, in our cases, to the fact that the ideologically antisystem goals of some parties remains unrealized.

17. While polarized democracies are obviously much more vulnerable to breakdown, Sartori's model is not deterministic, leaving open the possibility that actors counteract the centrifugal propensities of the party system (Sartori 1982, 206–7).

Meanwhile, the *lieu d'élection* of the debate about counterfactuals is history, a subject about which debate on the matter is as old as it is heated. The famous scathing

denunciations of counterfactual analysis by Carr (1986), Thompson (1978), Fischer (1970) and several others have more recently given way to more open positions affirming the importance of counterfactual analysis in historical research (e.g., Bulhof 1999). For a recent overview of the debate on the issue, see Ferguson (1997).

18. For an excellent example of the use of counterfactuals in the study of international relations, see Lebow (2001).

19. As an international law scholar put it, "It has emerged that to strike a reasonable balance between safeguarding the substance of the rights enunciated to the greatest extent possible, on the one hand, and forestalling any abuses, on the other, has become one of the most delicate issues in a liberal state. The simple slogan 'no freedom for the foes of freedom' is much too rough to provide guidance" (Tomuschat 1992, 33).

20. The comparative study by van Donselaar (1995), although of great interest, does not make use of the theoretical tools of comparative politics (the author is an anthropologist) and hence has been virtually ignored in the debate.

21. A few outdated comparative legal analyses do exist: see, for example, Bon Valsassina (1957) and Brunner (1965).

22. These are the two cases on which, for example, Otto Kirchheimer concentrates his attention in his seminal *Political Justice* (see Kirchheimer 1961, especially 138–60). On the problem of the treatment of extremism in the United States, see Gibson (1988) and Peffley and Sigelman (1990), among others. Some studies, such as Boventer (1985a and b), and Canu (1996), include other political systems, but in general they fail to elaborate concepts which can be used in truly comparative analyses.

23. Needless to say, the classificatory scheme of short-term reactions laid out in chapter 3 would need expanding to fit the more complex situation of contemporary democracies. Among repressive strategies, it seems that the increasing importance of intelligence and infiltration in combating at least some form of extremism would need to be included, as is the case for civil society initiatives in persuading potential extremist followers.

24. A "minimal-procedural" definition of democracy can still allow meaningful and reasonably broad comparisons in some extra-European contexts. Islamic fundamentalist parties, for example, constitute radical challenges to democracy even in the minimal-procedural version, since they propose a radically alternative model of rule and threaten on that basis the gradual liberalization that is slowly taking place in several regimes in the Middle East. Islamic fundamentalist political parties are active in several countries of the area (e.g., Hudson 1995; Helmy 2003), but probably the best-known and most interesting case for our purposes is the Algerian crisis at the beginning of the 1990s, which unfolded in a way which is not essentially different from some interwar European cases. In December 1991 Algeria held its first multiparty elections in several decades. The fundamentalist Islamic Salvation Front (*Front Islamique du Salut,* FIS) won 189 of the 231 seats distributed in the first round of the two-ballot election, which virtually assured the party of a two-third majority in Parliament after the second round. This would have given the FIS the possibility of changing the constitution while respecting every procedure and without needing the support of any political ally. Before the second round of elections could take place, though, President Chadli Benjedid resigned and the army took over. A High Security Council was installed, whose first important ruling was to cancel the second round of elections. The Council banned the FIS, arrested many of its leaders and members, shut down several newspapers that

had supported the Islamists, and declared a state of emergency that lasted for several years. An important difference between Algeria and the interwar European countries in which democracy was "killed from above" is that the Middle Eastern country represents a rare and possibly unique historical example in which a single antidemocratic party threatened to take over the system *alone* and was on the verge of obtaining the necessary parliamentary majorities to do so (e.g., Lavenue 1993; Fox and Nolte 1995; Samuelson 1995; Stone 1997; Oeter 1998; Ruf 1998; Roberts 2003).

25. The FPÖ was included in government in coalition with the Christian Democrats (*Österreichische Volkspartei,* ÖVP) after the former's substantial electoral gains in 1999, when the party obtained 26.9% of the vote and 52 seats. The government collapsed after three years, forcing new elections in which the FPÖ share of the vote declined to 10% (corresponding to 18 seats), after which a weaker form of the same coalition resumed power. In the Netherlands, the List Pim Fortuyn obtained an electoral breakthrough in 2002 with 17% of the vote and 26 seats in the National *Tweede Kamer.* This result gained the party the inclusion in the coalition government led by the Christian Democratic leader Jan Peter Balkenende. As in Austria, the coalition soon broke down, new elections were called in January 2003, in which the List Pim Fortuyn, internally divided and deprived of its leader (assassinated by a fanatic on the eve of the 2002 elections), only obtained 5.7% of the vote and 8 seats.

26. Martti Ahtisaari, Jochen Frowein, and Marcelino Oreja, "Austria-Report for 14 Member States of the European Union." Published on the Internet (http://www.mpil.de/de/Bericht-EU/index.cfm). Last accessed in April 2004.

27. Most of the work in this area has focused on antiterrorism legislation (e.g., Schmid and Crelinsten 1998; Reinares 2000), while, although some overlap is to be expected, no comparable work exists on legislative limitations of basic freedoms for the aim of repressing nonviolent extremism.

28. For example, Lebow defines political learning as "the understandings actors have of each other and of their environments, and how these understandings evolve and become shared" (Lebow 2000a, 616). Bermeo defines it as a process that involve cognitive changes brought on by changes in one's political environment (Bermeo 1990, 372).

29. See text at: http://europa.eu.int/eur-lex/en/treaties/dat/nice_treaty_en.pdf. Last accessed in April 2004.

30. The expression "domestic political maelstrom" comes from Simmons (1994, 287).

31. Moreover, one should be cautious in making easy assumptions about Masaryk's charisma automatically transferring to his successor. In fact, the Czechoslovak political spectrum was much more deeply divided on Beneš than it was on Masaryk. We should not allow the election of Beneš to the presidency in 1935 with a vast majority of votes to mislead us: substantial parts of the establishment, notably the internal right wing of the Agrarian party, were firmly against him and lined up with the Czech, Slovak, and Sudeten German right-wing forces to elect a relatively obscure Czech nationalist, Bohumil Nemec. The two fronts were virtually even until the very last minute: Beneš's front managed to get its candidate elected only after a last-minute external intervention in his favor by the Vatican on Hlinka, then leader of the Slovak People's Party, which had a pivotal vote. When it became clear that Hlinka would throw the weight of his party behind Beneš, thus ensuring his election, the opposite front crumbled and most of its components also voted for Beneš (see appendix B).

APPENDIX C: Anti-extremist Legislation in Czechoslovakia, Finland, and Belgium

1. The sources consulted are the official legislation collections: for Czechoslovakia, the *Sammlung der Gesetze und Verordnungen des čechoslowakischen Staates* (in German—"SdGuV" in the text); for Finland, the *Finlands Forfättningssamling* (in Swedish—"FF" in the text); for Belgium, the *Moniteur Belge* (in French—"MB" in the text).

2. For a more detailed analysis of Czechoslovak anti-extremist legislation during the interwar years, see Capoccia (2002b). Loewenstein (1938a and b) carries out a comparative analysis of anti-extremist legislation in interwar Europe, but his account contains several inaccuracies.

3. This government decree was supposed to be in force for one year, but it was reiterated and prolonged several times until July 1939 (see decrees of 16 July 1934, n. 163, SdGuV 1934, 589; 20 July 1935, n. 156, SdGuV 1935, 491; 24 June 1937, n. 165, SdGuV 1937, 902–3).

4. This law was implemented by decree n. 91 of 26 April 1923 (SdGuV 1923, 446–47). The State Court would be particularly active in 1933 against the Czech Fascists after an attempted coup and other violations (Capoccia 2002b).

5. This provision was reiterated in article 1 of the *Law amending and completing the Law for the Protection of the Republic of 10 July 1933, n. 124* (SdGuV 1933, 661). A general protection of personal honor from false allegations and libelous attacks carried out via the press was already granted by the *Law of 30 May 1924, n. 124* (SdGuV 1924, 891–99). The sanctions for such deeds did not include, in this law, the suspension or closure of the publication (this will be introduced later), but were sharpened, and included the possibility for the minister of internal affairs to withdraw public funds from the periodicals that breached the law (article 25).

6. This law amended the original electoral code for local elections of 31 January 1919, law n. 75, which is reproduced in the amended form in SdGuV 1933, 641–60.

7. In principle, the dissolution decree issued by the government could be submitted to judicial review (article 1) on the basis of the general rules of the due process of law. These were contained in article 2 of the Austro-Hungarian law on the Administrative Tribunal of 1875, which was still valid for Czechoslovakia, according to which "appeal lies to the Supreme Administrative Tribunal in any case in which a person contends that his rights have been curtailed by an allegedly illegal decision or order of an administrative authority." However, on rejecting the appeal against the dissolution decree of the DNSAP, the Supreme Administrative Tribunal also refused to rule on the argument that the law was unconstitutional because of lack of jurisdiction: they referred the matter to the Supreme Constitutional Tribunal. Evidently, however, nothing was done, because the members of the Supreme Constitutional Tribunal had not been reappointed after the end of their term in 1931 (Loewenstein 1938a, 620).

8. The origin of this provision must be looked for in German history: after the *Putsch* attempt of 1923, the NSDAP was dissolved and its property confiscated (170,000 marks). The party was reconstituted in 1925, but its assets were formally owned by a holding company. The aim of this was that, if the party were to be outlawed, its assets would remain untouched by the ban, since they were held by a formally "neutral" association of private law. After 1925, Hitler made himself both chairman of the party and of the private holding company, thus allowing him to dispose of its property at his

discretion. (Loewenstein 1938a, 619). The inventory, preservation, and administration of the patrimony sequestered to a dissolved party was regulated in detail by the decree n. 202 of 3 November 1933 "regarding the enactment of detailed provisions on the inventory, preservation, and administration of the patrimony of suspended or dissolved political parties and on dispositions aimed at avoiding that this patrimony escapes inventory" (SdGuV 1933, 851–53). Similar measures were taken in France, Finland, and England at the time.

9. The procedure for deciding what individuals should actually lose their seat for this reason was to take place before the "Mandate Senate" of the Supreme Administrative Tribunal, which normally dealt with problems of contested elections. This was, however, a merely formal competence, and did not in any case take a view on the political advisability of the dissolution itself, which remained at the discretion of the government.

10. In December 1934 it was renewed until 1 January 1936 (Law n. 269, SdGuV 1934, 1071), in May 1936 until 1 January 1937 (Law n. 132, SdGuV 1936, 543), and in December 1936 until 1 January 1938 (Law n. 317, SdGuV 1936, 1459).

11. The *Law for the Protection of the Republic* was amended a last time on 13 May 1936 with the introduction of several provisions regarding military treason (*Law amending and completing the Law for the Protection of the Republic of 13 May 1936, n. 130,* SdGuV 1936, 459–61).

12. The "border districts" were definted in the decree of 19 June 1936, n. 155 (SdGuV 1936, 599–604).

13. The law was accompanied by six ad hoc decrees (excluding the one listing the border districts) that regulated a detailed control of the government and mainly the Ministry of Defense on economic and productive activities, for most of which a governmental authorization was introduced (this included the production of goods related to communications, transport, and even the textile, paper and leather industries, as well as weapons); the patenting of inventions in several fields was to be communicated to the Ministry of Defense, and its authorization was necessary in order to take goods falling in a large numbers of categories in and out of the Czechoslovak territory. Moreover, an additional statute was passed to launch a public loan to finance the governmental activities made necessary by the *Law for the Defense of the State* (Law of 29 May 1936, n. 142, SdGuV, 563–64)

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